JOURNAL OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC

Summer 1993 Vol. 13, No. 2

Published by the
Society for Historians of the Early American Republic
Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis

JOURNAL OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC
A magazine devoted to history and culture of the United States from 1789 to 1848

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The JOURNAL OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC is committed to the history and culture of the United States from 1789 to approximately 1850, and the Editor is interested in receiving articles for consideration which relate to this period. The terms history and culture are interpreted broadly, and contributions in political, economic, social, cultural, and other fields are welcome. Typewritten papers, doublespaced, with notes and citations on separate pages, also doublespaced, should be submitted in duplicate, accompanied by a stamped return envelope. Author's name and address should appear only on a separate title page. These steps will facilitate our policy of anonymous manuscript review and the prompt return of unused materials. Correspondence regarding editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, JOURNAL OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC, Indiana University at Indianapolis, 425 University Boulevard, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140.

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1993
SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF
THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

ISSN: 0275-1275

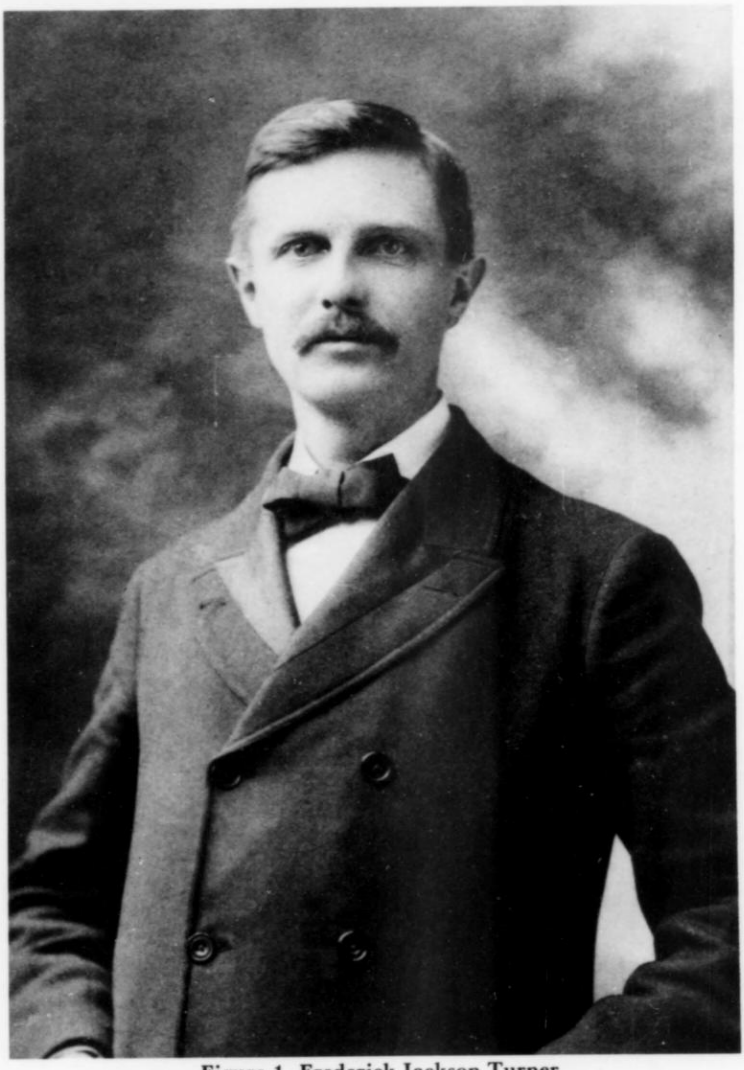

Figure 1. Frederick Jackson Turner

Source: State Historical Society of Wisconsin

A CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER

(*This issue represents a new departure for the* Journal of the Early Republic *in that a series of invited essays, all devoted to the impact of Frederick Jackson Turner's ideas upon different disciplinary subfields within our own subfield of the early republic, comprise the entire number, except for our regular non-article sections. The editors would like to express their thanks to John Lauritz Larson, who not only stimulated the initial thinking about a special Turner centennial issue but also graciously consented to serve, in effect, as its guest editor. We are also particularly grateful to the nine other scholars who contributed their fine interpretive essays. RDG*)

Turner the Historian: A Long Shadow

Martin Ridge

The present generation of historians is jaded. It has suffered through more anniversaries, celebrations, and commemorations than any of its predecessors. Beginning in the 1960s with the Civil War centennials, historians have commemorated the bicentennial of the American Revolution, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights; the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War; and the quincentennial of the Columbian Encounter. Almost all of these

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Martin Ridge, Senior Research Associate, The Huntington Library, is the biographer of *Ignatius Donnelly: The Portrait of a Politician* (1962), co-author with Ray Allen Billington of *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (1982), and author of numerous articles on Turner, the frontier, and the American West.

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activities have been sponsored by state and national commissions, marked by well-publicized popular celebrations, television presentations, the issuance of postage stamps, and exhibitions at art galleries and historical societies. Many historians doubtless look toward the waning years of the decade with a sense of relief in the hope that they will not be drawn into the public arena where they express carefully guarded opinions concerning historical events about which amateurs have, without fear, rendered final verdicts.

This year, 1993, will be different. American historians—generally beyond the public's gaze—will quietly honor the work of one of their own, Frederick Jackson Turner's famous essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Typical of the discipline, the papers written or the gatherings to commemorate Turner's address at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 will be characterized by scholarly historical validation, assessment, correction, damnation with feint praise, revision, and severe criticism. Turner's career and the influence of his publications will doubtless too come under close scrutiny. All of this is entirely justified because Turner's essay, and his other work, cast a longer shadow across the study of the American past than that of any other historian. For since Turner, American historians have looked, some might say in vain, for a new "vision of the past which will enable" them "to remake the present and the future."[1] Meanwhile, Turner's ideas have become so integral a part of the American mentalité that they may persist in some form indefinitely.[2]

Turner never denied that his life and his scholarship were inextricably interrelated.[3] He was born in Portage, Wisconsin, on November 14, 1861. His parents had come to the state toward the close of its frontier period. They were native-born, white, urban, and middle-class settlers. His mother had taught school; his father was a printer and newspaper publisher, a Republican state legislator and mayor, and a small-time entrepreneur. While setting type at the printer's

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[1] Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly*, 16 (Summer 1964), 261-262.

[2] See Martin Ridge, "The Life of an Idea: The Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 41 (Winter 1991), 2-13.

[3] Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York 1973) is the authoritative biography, but one should not overlook Wilbur R. Jacobs, ed., *Frederick Jackson Turner's Legacy: Unpublished Writings in American History* (San Marino, Cal. 1965).

bench and listening to his father's political table talk, Turner learned the nature of party politics, of ethnic voting blocs, and of the traditions of partisanship. His father's financial endeavors also highlighted for Turner the possibilities that existed in the underdeveloped West for ambitious, hard-working men who were willing to invest and risk.

Portage, with 4,000 inhabitants in 1870, was an "up-and-coming" town during Turner's youth, but it had scarcely outgrown its frontier past. It was located on the early fur-trade route between Green Bay and the Mississippi River, and in Turner's time it was still a logging center and farm-marketing town. To live in Wisconsin in the post-Civil War era was to be conscious of the transformation of America that came with the taming, developing, and exploiting of the frontier. As an adult Turner recalled Portage as something out of Mark Twain's America, with Indians, immigrants, river men, loggers, and toughs. He even remembered a lynching. Turner was also keenly aware of the shift from subsistence to commercial farming and the rapid industrialization of the Middle West. To Turner, who lived through a sequence of modernization, post-Civil War Wisconsin was a microcosm of the history of the West.

Turner attended the University of Wisconsin, then a small land-grant college. He made the most of his college years by joining a social fraternity, editing the school newspaper, and winning the Burrows Prize in oratory. He was a careful student of rhetoric, but his first love was history; and he fell under the influence of William F. Allen, Wisconsin's first and sole professor of history. Allen, who was Harvard educated and German trained, had a profound effect on Turner because he introduced him to the scientific methods that were to dominate the American academy. After a brief stint as a journalist in both Chicago and Milwaukee, Turner happily returned to Wisconsin to seek a masters degree and to teach in Allen's absence.

Determined to be a professional historian, and goaded by the president of Wisconsin, Turner went to Johns Hopkins to earn his doctorate. At Hopkins he encountered a brilliant graduate faculty and student body, which included Richard T. Ely, Charles Homer Haskins, Woodrow Wilson, J. Franklin Jameson, and especially Herbert Baxter Adams, a doyen of American history. Adams's seminar brought together scholars from many fields to share their knowledge and engage in critical discourse.[4] Adams, too, was German trained,

[4] He included philosophers like Josiah Royce, who had also been exposed to German training and had an interest in community. Robert V. Hine, *Josiah Royce: From Grass Valley to Harvard* (Norman, Okla. 1992), 94-95.

and he instilled in his students a deep respect for scientific methodology and positivist thinking about history.[5] A proponent of the "germ theory," which held that all American institutions had their origins among the Teutonic tribes, Adams was a member of the Anglo-Saxon school along with John W. Burgess of Columbia.[6] Adams depicted an evolutionary pattern among people's social and governmental institutions with the Anglo-American "race" at an apex.

When Turner left Hopkins he was widely read and infused with an enviable spirit of serious inquiry that was to remain with him throughout his lifetime.[7] In 1889 he returned to Wisconsin to establish a seminar similar to his mentor's. He also launched into a publishing career that was to identify him as an active member of the profession.[8] Virtually all of his empirical scholarly work focused on the early national and middle period of American history. During his first decade and a half at Wisconsin, he published a score of essays and edited documents in the *American Historical Review* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, as well as his first book, *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829*.[9]

Turner's early intellectual development at Wisconsin was remarkable. It gradually separated him from his contemporaries and demonstrated his special gifts. In 1891 he published an essay in the *Wisconsin Journal of Education* entitled, "The Significance of History," in which he explained how history should be studied, how history should be written, and why historical knowledge was vital to citizens in a free society.[10] It was, wrote Warren Susman, an "extraordinary essay . . . which is really one of the earliest statements of the 'New History' position that [Charles A.] Beard and [James Harvey] Robinson were to espouse."[11] Had Turner been better known, had the essay found a

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[5] For the rise of the scientific empiricist school, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass. 1988).

[6] For an incisive analysis of the Anglo-Saxon school, see Thomas L. Hartshorne, *The Distorted Image: Changing Conceptions of the American National Character Since Turner* (Cleveland 1968), 17-19.

[7] Turner's biographer describes him as "a glutton for data." Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 481.

[8] Turner did not review books very often, but he was a cogent analyst and a sharp critic of amateurs. See Martin Ridge, "A More Jealous Mistress: Frederick Jackson Turner as a Book Reviewer," *Pacific Historical Review*, 55 (Feb. 1986), 49-63.

[9] For a complete list of Turner's publications, see *Frederick Jackson Turner: A Reference Guide*, ed. Vernon E. Mattson and William E. Marion (Boston 1985).

[10] See "The Significance of History," in Martin Ridge, ed., *History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays by Frederick Jackson Turner* (Albuquerque 1993), 39-58.

[11] Susman, "History and the American Intellectual," 254.

more prestigious place of publication, had it been written by a more established scholar, it would have been widely heralded as pathbreaking.[12] In this essay Turner warned against the dangers of Americans writing nationalistic "tribal history," a situation that had "prevailed for many years in this country," where "a society . . . looks with contempt upon the history and institutions of the rest of the world."[13] Ironically, within two years, Turner published the frontier essay, which was to be the cornerstone of twentieth-century arguments for American exceptionalism and a unique national character.

Turner's appearance at the American Historical Association Meeting during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 occurred by chance. He had written an essay, "Problems in American History," for the University of Wisconsin student newspaper, and mailed a copy to Herbert Baxter Adams.[14] Evocative, the essay contained the germ of the two ideas—the frontier and sectionalism—that were to interest Turner all of his academic life. Adams, no mean essayist himself, saw a good deal of promise in the article and suggested that Turner read a similarly challenging piece for the forthcoming Chicago historical meeting. At first, Turner suggested that one of his students, Orin G. Libby, present some of his research, but then he relented and agreed to read a paper. Turner was one of five scholars to give addresses, and there is no recorded account that his presentation generated any excitement.

In fact, even after Turner mailed copies of a printed version of the paper to historians and professional writers, their responses were mixed. Edward Everett Hale thought it "curious and interesting"; and Charles M. Andrews envied Turner his "romantic" sources. Theodore Roosevelt felt that Turner had "struck some first class ideas" and gathered together "a good deal of thought that had been floating around rather loosely." And John Fiske wrote, "excellent, *admirable* essay . . . . I have been working along toward the same per-

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[12] Ian Tyrrell observes: "Turner also resembled *Annales* scholars in his emphasis on a much broader conception of historical sources than most of his contemporaries. He viewed all records, not merely literary evidence and government documents, as critical source materials for the reconstruction of history." Ian Tyrrell, *The Absent Marx: Class Analysis and Liberal History in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, Conn. 1986), 25.

[13] Martin Ridge, ed., *Frederick Jackson Turner: Wisconsin's Historian of the Frontier* (Madison 1986), 58.

[14] *Aegis*, 7 (Nov. 1892), 48-52.

spective . . . ."[15] Within a decade Turner's essay had become a landmark in American scholarship, and in less than twenty years he was president of the American Historical Association precisely because of it.[16]

"The Significance of the Frontier in American History" is elegant in its simplicity. It argues that a compelling fact in American life until the end of the nineteenth century was the advancing settlement of the frontier and its effect on the nation at large, later generations, and the national character of the American people. It also argues that any interpretation of American history or national institutions can best be understood in the context of the social, economic, and political experience of people on the moving frontier. Turner claimed no thorough treatment: "This paper will make no attempt to treat the subject exhaustively; its aim is simply to call attention to the frontier as a fertile field for investigation, and to suggest some of the problems which arise in connection with it." Such a disclaimer masked a set of assumptions, omissions, assertions, and generalizations that have challenged historians for a century. Turner's hypothesis touched virtually every field of American history. As a result, scholars have praised it, denounced it, and tried to ignore it; but repeatedly, when they have attempted to formulate general theories about the American past, Turner's essay reappears in the dialogue.[17]

In the compass of a brief paper it is only possible to sketch out some of the areas in American history, both major and minor, in which Turner's frontier hypothesis was a factor. Of course, in the area of frontier and western history, Turner proved pivotal—the father of the field—and his followers, especially Frederick L. Paxson, Frederick Merk, and Ray Allen Billington, dominated it for decades, despite many valid criticisms.[18] There has long been an energetic de-

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[15] Edward Everett Hale to Turner, Apr. 21, 1924; Charles M. Andrews to Turner, Apr. 21, 1894; Theodore Roosevelt to Turner, Feb. 10, 1894; John Fiske to Turner, Feb. 6, 1894, Frederick Jackson Turner Papers (Huntington Library, San Marino, Cal.).

[16] For the history of the essay's publications and exhibitions, see James P. Danky, "A Bibliographical Note," in Ridge, *Frederick Jackson Turner,* 63-65.

[17] For example, Alan Trachtenberg certainly takes strong exception to Turnerian interpretations but refers to the frontier essay as "momentous" and "epochal." Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York 1982), 13, 214.

[18] See Martin Ridge, "Frederick Jackson Turner and His Ghost: The Writing of Western History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society,* 101 (Apr. 1991), 65-76. For a convenient summary of the ways that some historians prefer to see the

bate among historians regarding whether the focus of the field should be on the West as a region (ignoring Turner's hypothesis) or on the westward movement per se that will only be resolved over time.[19] But most of the recent work has turned to areas that Turner perceived differently or neglected to mention. Turner, for example, recognized the degrading impact that white society had on the American environment because of its wastefulness and its belief that the continent's resources were infinite. He saw wastefulness as an aspect of the American character resulting from the frontier. He described Indian lands as essentially unoccupied and as a great gift to the Europeans. Modern environmentalists, who load their history with values from a presentist point of view, decry his insensitivity. Scholars have felt justifiably that Turner was far from inclusive in his historical perspective, and they have pointed out that minorities—Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians—received short-shrift in his work, and women none at all. Both subjects have proven highly fruitful fields of study.[20]

Some western historians, too, have argued that Turner was a racist because the essay treated Native Americans in monolithic terms as a savage people devoid of a culture. Certainly Turner was man of his times. He wrote at a time when white domination over the non-white world was at its zenith and when European and American ideologies postulated a racial, ethnic, and class hierarchy based on "immutable biological" laws, that mirrored the best science of the period.[21] But historians should also remember that Turner's essay overturned the equally racist implications of Herbert Baxter Adams and the Anglo-

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West as a regional rather than frontier phenomenon, see William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York 1992). For a recent view of how western historians view their predecessors, see Richard W. Etulain, ed., *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians* (Albuquerque 1991). For an extended overview of changing interpretations as well as the social context of western historiography, see Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque 1991).

[19] There is a bit of irony in the debate because the regionalists are trapped by Turner as the promoter of sectionalism, by which he meant regional study.

[20] For the status of the field, see the historical commentary by Sarah Deutsch, Virginia Scharff, Glenda Riley, and John Mack Faragher on western women's history in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History,* 41 (Spring 1991), 57-73; and the special issue, "Western Women's History Revisited," in *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (Nov. 1992), 459-559.

[21] See Elazar Barkan, "Rethinking Orientalism: Representations of 'Primitives' in Western Culture at the Turn of the Century," *History of European Ideas,* 15 (1992), 760.

Saxon school by asserting that Americans were a "mixed" race that included most immigrants from Europe, if not others, who had been exposed to the frontier experience. Turner's view may not have been inclusive but it was far more pluralistic than the work of some of his contemporaries. Moreover, committed as he was to the powerful influence of the frontier, Turner refused to "accept racial explanation of the genesis of national character."[22]

Turner's critics questioned his assertion—one critical to his thesis—that the first settlers in a region could impose on it lasting cultural characteristics. Turner was anticipating in terse form what has gained acceptance as the "doctrine of first effective settlement," although he heavily stressed in it the impact of the environment in the broadest sense. Colonial historians have accepted part of the concept but it has produced an ambiguous response from cultural geographers. For example, Wilbur Zelinsky observed that, "Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been." Zelinsky, however, later concludes that Turner's assertion, applied to the whole frontier, was "a proposition that has not been established through solid historical research and probably cannot be."[23]

Historians of the West and the frontier have tended to believe that Turner's essay was theirs to accept or reject and that it had no influence on other aspects of the discipline.[24] But because of his thinking about the interrelationship of land, farming, and politics, the first generation of agricultural historians claimed him as their own, and among the early presidents of the Agricultural History Society—Edward E. Dale, Solon J. Buck, and Avery O. Craven—all were Turnerians. In fact Turner wrote bemusedly to a friend, when he was

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[22] Hartshorne, *The Distorted Image*, 24. Turner's views are complex. His biographer argues that when Turner accepted the philosophy of the Jacksonian man, he also acquired Jacksonian prejudices. Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 436-437.

[23] Zelinsky feels that he found a satisfactory middle ground, but some readers will not agree that he has resolved the problem. Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 1973), 13, 34.

[24] A noteworthy exception is the work of David Alan Johnson, whose recent book, *Founding of the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley 1992), incorporates some ideas about republicanism. In this context see, Donald K. Pickins, "The Turner Thesis and Republicanism: A Historiographical Commentary," *Pacific Historical Review*, 61 (Aug. 1992), 319-340.

invited to give a paper at the Agricultural History Society, "I know too little of agriculture to distinguish barley from wheat, but I have started a lot of these men off in historical study of agriculture so they asked me to share myself."[25]

Historians interested in economic forces and a materialist interpretation of American history have found Turner's work problematic. Charles A. Beard initially criticized Turner because he emphasized sectional over class interests. He did concede, however, that "Turner deserves everlasting credit for his services as the leader in restoring the consideration of economic facts to historical writing in America."[26] In the 1930s Marxist historian Louis Hacker, who could criticize Beard's liberalism, emphatically rejected the influence of the frontier as a passing phase during the swift rise of industrial capitalism. Hacker, like many Marxists who saw parallels in European and American history, dismissed Turner's theories about the uniqueness of America and believed that its depression-ridden society would soon see class conflict and revolution. After the Second World War, Hacker and others were to revise their thinking.[27] Yet contemporary materialists, some of whom analyze the West, continue to see the development of the nation as a story of incorporation into the commercial and later the corporate world, especially at the expense of nonentrepreneurial groups and dependent and native peoples.[28]

Students of the American national character in the twentieth century have invariably started with Turner. As Thomas Hartshorne explained in his study of changing conceptions of the American character: "Because of its simplicity, clarity, and cogency, Turner's essay has become the prototype of national character study. Inquiry begins with Turner and may be regarded as a survey of attempts to discover an alternative to the frontier thesis."[29] David M. Potter does not entirely agree with Hartshorne but he notes that "Turner's picture reaffirmed some by-now-familiar belief about the American character." Potter also notes that Turner's contribution to the discussion of national character is often overlooked.[30]

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[25] Turner to Mrs. William Hooper, Dec. 19, 1922, Turner Papers.

[26] Charles A. Beard to Merle Curti, Aug. 15, 1928, *ibid.*

[27] After the Second World War, with a resurgence of interest in Turner's vision of America, Hacker had cause for embarrassment. Tyrrell, *The Absent Marx*, 30-34.

[28] See Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaw, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, Neb. 1983), and Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America.*

[29] Hartshorne, *The Distorted Image*, x-xi.

[30] David M. Potter, "The Quest for the National Character," in John Higham, ed., *The Reconstruction of American History* (New York 1962), 202.

Turner's frontier essay touched tap roots among many Americans. In a diluted fashion it became a rationale for the credibility of the popular culture of the American West.[31] His interpretation of American exceptionalism, both secular and beyond Anglo-Saxonism, afforded Americans a new spirit of nationalism. His emphasis on progress, mobility, materialism, and individualism reinforced traditional late nineteenth-century ideas and validated them for succeeding generations of Americans. His view of time and space and democratic institutions proved a powerful explanatory factor. And his idea of indigenous democracy repeatedly reborn gave special merit and meaning to local and regional history outside of New England and the South Atlantic states. All-in-all, as Richard Schlatter observed: "They are all included in the grand idea 'frontier' which Frederick Jackson Turner made a central concept in American historiography . . . ."[32]

Turner's final enterprise, The Book as he called it, his narrative examination of evolving sectionalism or regionalism in the Northeast, Southeast, and West, has had no such impact in the public or scholarly community.[33] If his theoretical essays on sectionalism were less persuasive among historians at the time and more influential with geographers and some social scientists, they continue to evoke discussion.[34] Like the frontier thesis, the idea of sectionalism—diluted—gained a kind of popular acceptance and persistence, but not in the manner that Turner conceived of it.

More's the pity, therefore, that too few historians of the early republic take the time to read carefully his *Rise of the New West* (1906) and *The United States, 1830-1850: The Nation and Its Sections* (1935) because both have not only remarkable charm but also imagination and freshness. They embody an astonishing and pioneering attempt to bring together geographical and historical factors; in some ways, because of Turner's interest in material life, they anticipate the Annalist school in France.[35] Even contemporary historians, who employ

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[31] See Ridge, "The Life of An Idea," 12-13; Nash, *Creating the West*, 197-257.

[32] Richard Schlatter, "The Puritan Strain," in Higham, ed., *Reconstruction of American History*, 27-28.

[33] Turner's biographer, Ray Allen Billington, believed the sectional hypothesis fatally flawed and would never match the frontier thesis in importance, Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 471.

[34] Michael C. Steiner, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Western Regionalism," in Etulain, ed., *Writing Western History*, 103-135.

[35] Tyrrell, *The Absent Marx*, 25.

sophisticated statistical methods, are impressed by Turner's attempt to correlate many variables.[36] Scholars who study areas where Turner worked find that he cannot be ignored. For example, in a new historiographic review of the early history of the Old Northwest, Peter Onuf and Andrew Cayton strive to overcome Turner's nineteenth-century bourgeois point of view; nevertheless, Turner's story commands their attention and respect while it continues to influence scholarship in the field.[37]

Turner's academic career took him to several institutions. After years of arguments with the trustees over issues as far ranging as intercollegiate athletics and research in the social sciences, he left Wisconsin for Harvard in 1910, where he taught until illness forced his retirement in 1924. He returned to Madison in the hope of continuing research but financial hardship compelled him to lecture and teach part time. In 1927, through the efforts of his long-time friend, Max Farrand, Turner joined the research staff of the Huntington Library. He died in 1932 with The Book unfinished. It was completed by Turner's secretary, Merrill H. Crissey, and his dedicated student, Avery Craven.

The centennial commemoration of the publication of "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" is in itself a remarkable historical event. No other piece of historical writing has been so honored. That historians of the early republic should recognize Turner's work is especially appropriate because he was one of them, and his westward-moving frontier was essentially an antebellum, east of the Mississippi River, phenomenon. But to commemorate Turner's essay does not necessarily mean to validate it. To some historians his history no longer makes sense. They find in his work flaws of racism, sexism, ethnocentricism, and class bias, but they have not been able

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[36] A good example of Turner's demanding methodology is in a letter to John D. Barnhart who applied to Harvard and hoped to study Nebraska Populism. Turner wrote: "do some work on it in Nebraska before coming here . . . . You should use the manuscript, newspaper, and state documentary material where it is more abundant, seeking not only the correspondence and speeches of leaders of various parties and state sections, but also the evidences of the reactions of the common voter . . . . In regard *intra* state sections, by counties (precincts where possible) as an important aspect of state politics." Turner then wanted Barnhart to correlate these with wealth, nativity, immigration, illiteracy, and rainfall as well as half a dozen other variables. Turner to Barnhart, Feb. 26, 1923, John D. Barnhart Papers (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.).

[37] Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington 1990).

to dismiss him. Perhaps the truest objection to Turner, and the one most often spoken and unspoken, was best expressed in a study of the Midwest where the authors wrote: "We need our own story."[38] As an iconoclast, Turner would not find that idea objectionable. As he wrote, and put in italics, in his essay on "The Significance of History": after all "*Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time.*"

Frontier Democracy: The Turner Thesis Revisited

Lacy K. Ford, Jr.

The one-hundredth anniversary of Frederick Jackson Turner's presentation of his pathbreaking essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," to the American Historical Association meeting in Chicago provides a propitious occasion for a brief reassessment of the "frontier thesis" and its lingering influence on the historiography of antebellum America. Turner's frontier thesis, with its emphasis on cheap western land and abundant economic opportunity, captured the popular imagination more than any other sweeping explanation of how the American national character was formed.[1] The two chief rivals of Turner's frontier thesis—Charles Beard's theme of recurring economic conflict between agrarian interests and commercial capitalism and Louis Hartz's contention that the principal formative influence on American character was a longstanding "liberal" consensus on the efficacy of political democracy and free-market capitalism—have both earned as much attention from scholars as has

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[38] *Ibid.*, 126.

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[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C. 1894), 197-228. For a recent reevaluation of Turner, see William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 18 (Apr. 1987), 157-176.

Turner's interpretation; but neither challenger has so captured the public mind.[2] Hartz's argument for pervasive liberalism proved to be a period piece heavily influenced by the solid anti-communist front of the 1950s as well as that era's vanilla image of Americans as "Ike"-voting, "Lucy"-watching, middle-class conformists. Hartz's liberal consensus position, which had always strained to explain away the Civil War, easily was shattered by the contentious decade of the 1960s, with its raucous challenge to established mores.[3] Beard's economic-conflict thesis, fully articulated by 1930, has demonstrated considerably more staying power among historians. Many active scholars, led by those on the political left, still emphasize economic struggle and class conflict as the chief sources of creative tension in American history.[4] But if modified Beardian interpretations remain visible in American historiography after more than half a century, his influence has always been felt primarily within the academy. The larger reading public remains almost instinctively resistant to any suggestion that their history has been riddled with class conflict. Firmly attached to the idea of American exceptionalism, Americans have searched their history (however superficially) for the source of their nation's singular character, and they have found in Turner's frontier thesis a plausible, and perhaps even compelling, explanation.[5] Very recently, in his inaugural call for American renewal, new President Bill Clinton articulated a thoroughly Turnerian view of Americans as "a restless, questing, hopeful people."[6]

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[2] For Beard's overview, see Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York 1927); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York 1955); and John Patrick Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York 1984), 122.

[3] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass. 1988), 320-468.

[4] Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York 1968), 167-346; Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (New York 1960), 95-213; John Patrick Diggins, "Power and Authority in American History: The Case of Charles A. Beard and His Critics," *American Historical Review*, 86 (Oct. 1981), 701-730.

[5] David W. Noble, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830* (Minneapolis 1965), esp. 37-55; Jackson K. Putnam, "The Turner Thesis and the Westward Movement: A Reappraisal," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 7 (Oct. 1976), 377-404; Martin Ridge, "Frederick Jackson Turner and His Ghost: The Writing of Western History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 101 (Apr. 1991), 65-76.

[6] New York (N.Y.) *Times*, Jan. 21, 1993.

It is hardly surprising that when Americans seek inspiration from their past that they would turn to the cautious progressive, Turner, rather than to the radical Beard.[7] After all, if Walt Whitman was the poet laureate of American democracy, Frederick Jackson Turner was its first professional court historian. But perhaps more importantly, there is arguably something about Turner and his frontier thesis, inspired as it was by the twilight years of the nineteenth century, that speaks directly to our condition in the waning years of the twentieth.

The normally optimistic Turner wrote his celebrated frontier essay in an odd moment of anxiety, as he fretted over a casual observation by a census bureau official that the 1890 enumeration revealed no discernible outer boundary of settlement, no legitimate "frontier."[8] Turner worried that the passing of the frontier marked a point of no return in the steady purchase of urbanization and industrialization on the essentially agrarian republic of the nineteenth century. He feared that the Jeffersonian ideals of the family-farm yeomanry were being sacrificed on the altar of industrial capitalism by Wall Street's high priests of finance. Moreover, even though the nation's population was overwhelmingly rural when Turner was born in 1861, it had become nearly half urban by the time he wrote his frontier essay, and by 1920, when Turner published a book of essays reprinting his much acclaimed frontier piece, a majority of the American people lived in urban areas. As small-farm America disappeared, Turner, an affectionate son of the middle border, saw his worst nightmare realized: a cramped, crowded, "Europeanized" America that was losing its distinctiveness. With the budding Populist revolt of the 1890s providing unmistakable background noise, the provincial Turner wrote his frontier essay to warn of impending decline.[9]

Late twentieth-century Americans labor under a surprisingly similar anxiety. The United States' modern self-image as a powerful industrial behemoth, a nation with "big shoulders," is being tried sorely by the enervating competition of a new global economy. The apparent decline of heavy industry, the flow of jobs overseas, and a per capita income that has fallen out of the world's top dozen have

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[7] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 87-108.

[8] Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians*, 47-83; Benson, *Turner and Beard*, 41-91.

[9] Martin Ridge, "Frederick Jackson Turner, Ray Allen Billington, and American Frontier History," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 19 (Jan. 1988), 4-20. Turner explained why he feared that the closing of the frontier portended decline again in his "The Significance of the Sections in American History," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 8 (Mar. 1925), 255-280.

sparked fears about the coming post-industrial order that closely parallel the fears Americans of the 1890s felt about the emerging industrial order. Moreover, the winding down of America's industrial century has been marked by a demographic shift that parallels the rapid urbanization of the late nineteenth century. In the 1990s, for the first time, the majority of Americans are neither rural nor urban but suburban. Just as the alleged closing of the western frontier signaled Turner that the agrarian republic was losing out to urban, industrial society, deindustrialization and the movement of people to the crabgrass frontier suggest to many late twentieth-century Americans the disconcerting arrival of new, post-industrial, suburban society.[10]

This *angst* of the post-modern era informs our moment for reviewing Turner's old arguments on behalf of American exceptionalism, and particularly his contention that the frontier served as the "sociocultural furnace" in which American democracy was forged.[11] In recent decades, two identifiable trends in American historiography have borne more or less directly on Turner's "frontier democracy" hypothesis. One of these trends involves the rapidly proliferating body of literature labeled as the "new social history" and the "new economic history." These studies employ an array of analytical tech-

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[10] For a brief introduction to these themes, see Lester C. Thurow, *The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change* (New York 1980); Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for Twenty-First Century Capitalism* (New York 1991); Robert Kuttner, *The End of Laissez-Faire: National Purpose and The Global Economy After the Cold War* (New York 1991); Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York 1988); William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins," *The Atlantic*, 270 (July 1992), 33-44; and Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York 1985), 231-305.

[11] Michael P. Malone, "Beyond the Last Frontier: Toward a New Approach to Western American History," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 20 (Nov. 1989), 409-427 (quotation at 410). Turner, a product of his era as well as his region, defined "democracy" in such a way that it applied essentially to males, and usually to white males. Thus he found "democratic" leanings among people who advocated extremely anti-democratic measures regarding women, African-Americans (slave and free), and Native Americans. In addition to the first article cited in this note, these severe problems with Turner's understanding of democracy have been vividly enumerated in Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York 1987); Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," *Pacific Historical Review*, 49 (May 1980), 173-213; and Cronon, "The Vanishing Frontier," 173-176. For this essay, I have attempted to examine the effect of the frontier on American "democracy" using Turner's own understanding of democracy as the standard, so that his work might be judged on its own terms.

niques and computerized data bases, borrowed from the social sciences, to study migration patterns, social mobility, wealth distribution, and class structure. These methodologically sophisticated approaches have produced a number of detailed studies of nineteenth-century communities, regions, and social groups and facilitated the first rigorous empirical testing of Turner's safety-valve argument.[12] The other historiographical trend that is especially relevant to any reassessment of Turner's thesis is the recent flurry of state, local, and regional studies of political culture during the American middle period. These studies, heavily influenced by the "republican synthesis" that reshaped our understanding of revolutionary era politics during the 1970s, pay special attention to issues such as suffrage and representation, and hence shed important new light on the social forces driving political democratization in antebellum America.[13]

The recent wealth of scholarship using the methods of the "new social" or "new economic" history still begs for coherent synthesis, but on balance this literature suggests that if "frontier democracy" meant anything like social or economic equality, or even rough equality of opportunity, then western reality fell far short of the Turnerian ideal. As a rule on the American frontier, from Ohio and Tennessee westward to California, settlement was followed quickly by the emer-

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[12] For an introduction to this vast literature, see Howard P. Chudacoff, "Success and Security: The Meaning of Social Mobility in America," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (Dec. 1982), 101-112; Theodore K. Rabb, "The Development of Quantification in Historical Research," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (Spring 1983), 591-602; J. Morgan Kousser, "The State of Social Science History in the Late 1980s," *Historical Methods*, 22 (Winter 1989), 13-20; Hugh Rockoff, "History and Economics," *Social Science History*, 15 (Summer 1991), 239-264; and Lance E. Davis and Stanley Engerman, "Cliometrics: The State of the Science (or Is It Art or, perhaps, Witchcraft?)," *Historical Methods*, 20 (Summer 1987), 97-106. Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography," *American Historical Review*, 87 (Feb. 1982), 1-24, is perhaps the most prominent of many works that express skepticism about the recent trend toward treating history as a social science. Richard Jensen, "On Modernizing Frederick Jackson Turner: The Historiography of Regionalism," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 11 (July 1980), 307-322, briefly examines how the community and regional focus of the "new" social science-oriented history has revived interest in Turner's arguments.

[13] For analysis of this trend, see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History*, 79 (June 1992), 11-38; Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism and Ideology," *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 461-473; Sean Wilentz, "On Class and Politics in Jacksonian America," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (Dec. 1982), 45-63; and Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (Apr. 1982), 334-356.

gence of powerful local elites, often composed of successful land speculators who quickly stamped their influence on their locale. Some members of these elites were self-made men, but most drew heavily on family wealth and connections back in the East.[14] Upward mobility rates in frontier areas as different as Chillicothe, Ohio, in the early 1800s and San Francisco in the 1850s suggest a degree of opportunity only slightly greater than that available in long-established eastern cities, and if opportunity to move up was slightly greater in frontier towns than eastern cities, so too was the possibility of going broke.[15]

The boom or bust economies of frontier towns so frightened newly formed elites that fierce competition among aspiring banking and mercantile leaders often grudgingly gave way to a spirit of voluntary cooperation. Frontier entrepreneurs quickly realized that their individual fortunes depended heavily on the larger economic fate of their towns, and that the towns themselves competed with nearby rivals for population, trade, and government favor. Thus the relentless quest for economic growth, some authors suggest, turned frontier towns into centers of bourgeois cooperation and boosterism rather than the testing ground of rugged individualism suggested by Turnerian lore.[16] Of course, as Don H. Doyle has rightly reminded us, any model of frontier towns that emphasizes only entrepreneurial collaboration is as unbalanced as Turner's emphasis on unfettered individualism. Despite the harmonious images projected by boosters, frontier towns witnessed violence and conflict with "southerners caning Yankees, vigilante mobs chasing abolitionists, Christians squabbling over the doctrine of infant baptism, police raids on Irish grog shops," and other types of internecine quarrels.[17] Frontier elites reluctantly

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[14] For an historiographical overview, see Ralph Mann, "Frontier Opportunity and the New Social History," *Pacific Historical Review*, 53 (Nov. 1984), 463-491.

[15] Peter Decker, *Fortunes and Failures: White Collar Mobility in Nineteenth Century San Francisco* (Cambridge, Mass. 1978); Jeffrey P. Brown, "Chillicothe's Elite: Leadership in a Frontier Community," *Ohio History*, 96 (Summer/Autumn 1987), 140-156; Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass. 1973); Clyde and Sally Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge, Mass. 1978).

[16] This frontier-as-incubator-of-cooperation argument was pioneered by Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "A Meaning For Turner's Frontier, Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest," *Political Science Quarterly*, 69 (Sept. 1954), 321-353; and Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York 1965), esp. 113-168.

[17] Don Harrison Doyle, "Social Theory and New Communities in Nineteenth-Century America," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (Apr. 1977), 151-165 (quotation at

acknowledged the futility of eliminating such conflict, but they embraced the idea of containing these conflicts within acceptable boundaries as the key to social stability and economic growth.

The instruments for controlling inevitable conflict, according to Doyle, were the civic, religious, and political institutions that eventually came to dominate frontier towns. These churches, political parties, and business clubs served to institutionalize conflict, thereby diverting sectarian disputes, political grudges, and business rivalries into channels where rational, if heated, debate displaced violent physical assault. These voluntary institutions, Doyle emphasizes, did not eliminate conflict so much as routinize it, but in so doing they provided venues and organizations through which like-minded members of frontier communities pursued common goals. Thus frontier towns were sustained not by the individual self-assertion celebrated by Turner nor by the neighborly cooperation touted by his early critics, but by the rapid evolution of the unglamorous social bureaucracies of churches, schools, civic clubs, and political parties. If frontier towns defined American democracy, then the latter is better understood as the product of pious "joiners," sociable women, and "clubable" middle-class men than the heroic egalitarians of Turner's imagined West.[18]

Recent studies of the rural frontier, in both North and South, also present an ambiguous picture of opportunity and social mobility. The rural North, where commercial agriculture predominated but the scarcity of labor limited farm size, boasted a more even distribution of wealth than either the rural South, where slaves provided the plantation labor force, or the urban North, where propertyless free laborers constituted a significant portion of the population. But even in the rural North, as Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman have pointed out, the distribution of wealth hardly fit the "classic egalitarian" model. By 1860, the richest 20 percent of all households in the rural North controlled over 60 percent of the wealth.[19] This distribution was markedly more even than that of the cotton South, where the wealthiest

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157). Earlier works that emphasize conflict on the frontier include Allen G. Bogue, "Social Theory and the Pioneer," *Agricultural History*, 34 (Jan. 1960), 21-34; and Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York 1968).

[18] Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana 1978), 62-91, 156-193.

[19] Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, "The 'Egalitarian Ideal' and the Distribution of Wealth in the Northern Agricultural Community: A Backward Look," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 63 (Feb. 1981), 124-129.

Figure 2. Professor Turner, University of Wisconsin, 1881

Source: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

10 percent of households owned over 60 percent of the wealth, or that of northern cities such as Boston or New York, where the richest 5 percent of the population controlled nearly two thirds of the wealth.[20] But within the rural North, once adjustments are made for the differing age structure of the populations, wealth was only marginally more evenly distributed on the "frontier" (one fifth owning 64 percent) than it was in the older Northeast (one fifth owning 67 percent).[21]

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[20] Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York 1978), 24-37; Edward Pessen, "The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality: Wealth, Mobility, and Equality in the 'Era of the Common Man'," *American Historical Review*, 76 (Oct. 1971), 989-1031.

[21] Atack and Bateman, "The 'Egalitarian Ideal,'" 125-126.

Even if the frontier did not produce an egalitarian distribution of wealth, recent scholarship suggests that prospects for upward mobility were reasonably good in antebellum America, and especially good on the frontier. Life-cycle models of wealth accumulation presume that households grow wealthier as their heads grow older, with accumulation levelling off as the head approaches "retirement" age. Such models neatly explain the economic career of the typical antebellum rural white American.[22] Roughly two thirds of rural antebellum householders owned land (though the percentage varied widely from locale to locale and may have been slightly lower in the plantation South than elsewhere), and the majority of landless householders were young tenants whose chances were reasonably good for acquiring land as they grew older.[23]

Throughout the antebellum era, this "agricultural ladder" remained a viable instrument for upward social mobility in both the North and South. Young tenants, lacking capital and perhaps expertise, worked as renters for several years until profit, inheritance, or propitious marriage allowed them to purchase land. In the rural North, for instance, over 60 percent of all tenant farmers were under age forty. While over 23 percent of young farm operators (under the age of twenty-five) were tenants, fewer than 7 percent of those over age 50 still worked on rented farms.[24] A similar pattern held in the rural South, where over 60 percent of all tenants had yet to reach age

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[22] Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, "Egalitarianism, Inequality, and Age: The Rural North in 1860," *Journal of Economic History*, 41 (Mar. 1981), 85-93.

[23] The list of local studies documenting this point is far too long to be cited here, but for a sampling, see Donald L. Winters, "'Plain Folk' of the Old South Reexamined: Economic Democracy in Tennessee," *Journal of Southern History*, 53 (Nov. 1987), 565-586; Randolph B. Campbell, "Planters and Plain Folk: Harrison County, Texas, as a Test Case, 1850-1860," *ibid.*, 40 (Aug. 1974), 369-398; Donald Schaefer, "Yeoman Farmers and Economic Democracy: A Study of Wealth and Economic Mobility in the Western Tobacco Region, 1850-1860," *Explorations in Economic History*, 15 (Oct. 1978), 421-437; Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames, Iowa 1987); Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth Century New England* (Cambridge, Mass. 1984); Robert P. Swierenga, "Quantitative Methods in Rural Landholding," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (Spring 1983), 787-808; and Jeremy Atack, "Tenants and Yeoman in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History*, 62 (Summer 1988), 6-32.

[24] Jeremy Atack, "The Agricultural Ladder Revisited: A New Look at an Old Question with Some Data for 1860," *Agricultural History*, 63 (Winter 1989), 1-25; Donald L. Winters, "Agricultural Tenancy in the Nineteenth Century Middle West: The Historiographical Debate," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 78 (June 1982), 128-153.

forty, and where roughly 30 percent of all farm operators under age thirty were tenants while all but 12 percent of those over age forty owned their own land. Moreover, preliminary study reveals that nearly three fourths of all southern tenants in 1850 who remained in the same county until 1860 were successful in acquiring land.[25] Thus, in both the slaveholding and non-slaveholding sections of the pre-Civil War United States, prospects for both realizing the Jeffersonian dream of land ownership and of steadily increasing one's family wealth over a lifetime were quite good even though the overall distribution of wealth remained highly uneven in all parts of the country.

Modern scholarship appears to confirm the popular Turnerian perception that from the microeconomic vantage point of individual households, whether North or South, a decision to move to the frontier in search of a better life stood a good chance of proving correct. Nevertheless, as Harold Woodman has suggested, the aggregate or macroeconomic impact of the frontier on the antebellum economy and living standards was characterized by ambiguity and important regional variations. Between 1840 and 1860, a period of heavy westward migration, the national economy grew at an impressive rate. Due largely to the cotton boom of the 1850s, per capita income in the South grew even more rapidly than it did in the North, where personal incomes grew by a robust 30 percent during the twenty year period. Most of the apparent increase in per capita income in the staple-dominated South, however, owed to the movement of people out of older cotton and tobacco regions and into the virgin lands of the southwestern frontier. Without this movement out of the comparatively low income South Atlantic region and into the flush environment of the cotton frontier, personal income in the South would have grown more slowly than that of the North, notwithstanding the high cotton profits of the 1850s.

In the cotton South, the availability of agricultural land on the frontier may have enhanced inequalities of wealth among whites in the region, but it contributed mightily to overall economic growth. In the antebellum North, however, the Northeast had both a substan-

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[25] Donald L. Winters, "The Agricultural Ladder in Southern Agriculture: Tennessee, 1850-1870," *Agricultural History*, 61 (Summer 1987), 36-52. For a comprehensive discussion of the methodological problems involved in studying tenancy in the Old South, see Frederick A. Bode and Donald E. Ginter, *Farm Tenancy and the Census in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens 1986); and John T. Houdek and Charles F. Heller, Jr., "Searching for Nineteenth-Century Farm Tenants: An Evaluation of Methods," *Historical Methods*, 19 (Spring 1986), 55-61.

tially higher per capita income and a slightly faster rate of growth between 1840 and 1860 than did the region closer to the frontier, which experienced a 250 percent increase in population during the era. In fact, per capita incomes in the industrializing Northeast were nearly twice as high as those of the agricultural Northwest in both 1840 and 1860. In macroeconomic terms at least, northerners who left the industrial Northeast for the frontier moved from an area of high but very unevenly distributed incomes to an area of significantly lower but somewhat more evenly distributed earnings. In the face of this evidence, the massive relocation of northerners to the free-state frontier appears, on the surface, to represent a curious shift from a high-income area to a lower-income area. But a balanced assessment of the impact of the free-soil frontier on the antebellum northern economy requires an exercise in counterfactual history. Without the frontier as an economic "safety-valve," it is doubtful that the Northeast could have absorbed the large numbers of foreign immigrants it received during the 1840s and 1850s and still maintained its high level of personal income. Thus the frontier probably helped sustain antebellum northern prosperity even if it was not that region's engine of economic growth. Of course, if frontier land had not been available, it is possible that the antebellum North, like the antebellum South, would have attracted relatively few immigrants. In that case, income growth for native-born northerners might have been impressive despite the lack of cheap land, but the character of the nation as a whole, without the immigration, would have been altered dramatically.[26]

Taken together, these studies of individual social mobility and aggregate economic development reveal that antebellum America was a land of remarkable economic opportunity, and that, as Turner hypothesized, the frontier did much to enhance that opportunity.[27] In

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[26] This discussion draws heavily on Harold D. Woodman, "Economic History and Economic Theory: The New Economic History in America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (Autumn 1972), 323-350; but see also Robert E. Gallman, "Slavery and Southern Economic Growth," *Southern Economic Journal*, 45 (Apr. 1979), 1007-1022; Donald F. Schaefer, "A Model of Migration and Wealth Accumulation: Farmers at the Antebellum Southern Frontier," *Explorations in Economic History*, 24 (Apr. 1987), 130-157; and Richard H. Steckel, "The Economic Foundations of East-West Migration During the 19th Century," *Explorations in Economic History*, 20 (Jan. 1983), 14-36.

[27] James A. Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias," *Labor History*, 18 (Spring 1977), 165-178, and other studies

the South, the continued presence of a cotton frontier drove the region's impressive growth. In the North, the dynamics of growth owed more to the bustling commerce and budding manufacturing system of the Northeast than the frontier bread-basket, but the presence of the frontier facilitated northern growth even if it was not its primary cause. Yet for many antebellum Americans, economic well-being probably was not measured in terms of income levels (which were generally improving) or wealth distribution (which was generally worsening), but of personal or household independence. The foundation of independence was ownership and control of productive property, and thus land ownership was often considered a better measure of economic status than income. An impressive outpouring of literature that often disagrees on other matters supports that the notion that, above all else, antebellum Americans loathed the dependence of propertyless wage laborers.[28] And they were generally successful, in the short run, in avoiding what modern scholars, following Marx, call "proletarianization," because the frontier eased the way to property ownership with its abundant and relatively cheap land.[29] In doing so, the frontier "safety-valve" undoubtedly helped sustain the Jeffersonian ideal of independence, much as Turner maintained a century ago.

In recent decades, a number of scholars have argued that politics, not the frontier, served as the true "safety-valve" in American life. The United States, the argument goes, was the only modern indus-

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point out that cliometric work probably overstates the case for upward mobility since it tends to focus on those who "persist" over time in the same locale. These "persisters," it is argued, likely fared better on the average that their more mobile one-time neighbors, who moved often because of their lack of economic success. But even if recent works overstate the case for general upward mobility in antebellum America, the data provides almost incontrovertible proof that there was enough genuine upward mobility to sustain the popular perception of America, and its frontier, as a land of unique opportunity.

[28] For a sample, see Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York 1983), esp. 15-85; J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge 1978), 54-58; Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York 1988), 44-95; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York 1990), 42-72; Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia 1980); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York 1984), 61-142.

[29] Gavin Wright, "American Agriculture and the Labor Market: What Happened to Proletarianization?" *Agricultural History*, 62 (Summer 1988), 182-209.

trial nation to experience its democratic revolution before its industrial revolution. As a result, its comparatively inclusive politics muted social antagonism by directing them into legitimate political channels.[30] While Turner never offered such an argument, he asserted vehemently that political democracy was central to American distinctiveness, and that the frontier, more than anything else, fostered democracy. Turner's insistence on this point has been one of the most vigorously disputed aspects of his thesis.[31] Three generations of historians of the Jacksonian working class, from Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., through Edward Pessen, to Sean Wilentz, have argued persuasively that artisans, mechanics, and urban laborers pushed as hard for democracy as did sturdy frontier yeomen.[32] Comprehensive studies of suffrage by Chilton Williamson and of representation by J.R. Pole also challenged Turner's frontier democracy thesis.[33] In general, liberalized suffrage requirements and more equitable schemes of legislative apportionment were realized more easily in the frontier states, North and South, because democratic forces there had neither entrenched propertied elites nor difficult-to-amend eighteenth-century constitutions to contend with. Moreover, recent scholarship suggests that pressure for more legislative reapportionment came from areas with underrepresented populations, regardless of their proximity to the frontier. On this issue, the source of the egalitarian impulse was demographic, not geographic.[34] And, in at least one regard, states on

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[30] For a brief introduction to this argument, see Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States," *History Workshop Journal*, 17 (Spring 1984), 57-80.

[31] Early criticisms of Turner on this point are well summarized in two articles by Benjamin F. Wright, Jr.; see his "American Democracy and The Frontier," *Yale Review*, 20 (Dec. 1930), 349-365, and "Political Institutions and the Frontier," in Dixon R. Fox, ed., *Sources of Culture in the Middle West: Backgrounds versus Frontier* (New York 1934), 15-38.

[32] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (New York 1945); Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (New York 1967); Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 172-296.

[33] Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton 1960); J. R. Pole, *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic* (London 1966).

[34] Pole, *Political Representation*, esp. 281-353. For a sample of more recent investigations, see Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 49-52; Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 106-113; Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge 1983), 11-14, 86-103; Merrill D. Peterson, *Democracy, Liberty, and Property: The State Constitutional Conventions of the 1820s* (Indianapolis 1966); and Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *The Rhetoric of Conservatism: The Virginia Convention of 1829-30 and the Conservative Tradition in the South* (San Marino 1982). An older but still very useful account is Fletcher

the northern frontier lagged behind the free states on the seaboard: five northeastern states permitted free blacks to vote under some circumstances, but all of the states of the Old Northwest, the so-called "valley of democracy," limited suffrage to whites only.[35]

Yet recent historiography has fundamentally restructured our understanding of the meaning of "democracy" in its early national and Jacksonian contexts. Political "democracy," as it was understood through much of the antebellum era, was not a full-blown political creed but rather a crucial component in the larger ideology of republicanism. Republican ideology was part of nineteenth-century America's political and intellectual inheritance from the revolutionary era, and arguably the greatest achievement of the republican founders was their embrace of popular sovereignty, the idea that the ultimate political authority lay with the "people," rather than with a king, an aristocracy, or a supreme Parliament. At the same time, many early Americans feared majoritarian tyranny and democratic excess. The nation envisioned by the founders was not a democracy where simple majorities ruled but a republic whose structure incorporated elaborate checks and balances that could stymie renegade majorities as well as other threats to individual liberty. Moreover, the founders insisted that the success of their republican experiment hinged on the maintenance of a social order where the widespread ownership of productive property sustained an independent citizenry.[36]

In theory, at least, the popular political ideologies of the Jacksonian era continued to cherish independence and fear concentrated power, even that of majorities. But, in practice, within the larger lan-

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M. Green, *Constitutional Development in the South Atlantic States, 1776-1860: A Study in the Evolution of Democracy* (Chapel Hill 1930). Green presents his interpretation as evidence supporting Turner's thesis, but while Green's work supports the case for vigorous democracy in the Old South, his specific findings do not suggest that the frontier was democracy's primary agent.

[35] Williamson, *American Suffrage*, 208-222; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago 1961), 64-112.

[36] Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing The People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York 1988), 207-306; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York 1984), esp. 22-34; Jack N. Rakove, "The Madisonian Moment," *University of Chicago Law Review*, 55 (Spring 1988), 473-505; James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History*, 74 (June 1987), 9-33; Robert E. Shalhope, "Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism and Antebellum Southern Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, 42 (Nov. 1976), 529-557.

guage and existing governmental structure of republicanism, popular political culture in virtually all parts of the United States grew steadily more egalitarian even before Andrew Jackson's first presidential bid in 1824. Informal stump meetings, door-to-door canvassing, barbecues, and the politicization of militia musters, all brought *de facto* democracy to the politics of the early republic well before suffrage liberalization and other reforms formally opened the political process to virtually all white men. Within this democratizing political culture, Jacksonian political parties transformed the republican idea of popular sovereignty into an avowed democratic faith in the wisdom of popular majorities. Majority rule subtly replaced republican equipoise as the political creed of the expanding nation.[37] As William Freehling has aptly noted, this gradual transformation dichotomized republicans into two camps, "elitist republicans" who wanted to retain as much as possible the eighteenth-century traditions of gentry influence, the political prerogatives of property, and minority protection, and "egalitarian republicans" interested in expanding participation, majority rule, and the defense of the "people" against oligarchic power.[38] It is true that frontier states certainly favored the democratic side of this struggle within an evolving republicanism, but the true egalitarian impulse evolved more from the revolutionary heritage of popular sovereignty than from frontier circumstances.

One result of the gradual triumph of egalitarian republicanism over its more elitist rival involved the subtle broadening of the popular definition of "independence." In some areas "householders," heads of households who controlled their own affairs but owned no property, were perceived as "independent." In urban areas, artisans, craftsmen, and even skilled workers defined their work tools and spe-

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[37] For an introduction to these themes, see Steven J. Ross, "The Transformation of Republican Ideology," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Fall 1990), 323-330; Thornton, *Politics and Power*, 117-162; Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 99-182; Rowland Berthoff, "Independence and Attachment, Virtue and Interest: From Republican Citizen to Free Enterpriser, 1787-1837," in Richard L. Bushman *et al*, eds., *Uprooted Americans: Essays to Honor Oscar Handlin* (Boston 1979), 97-124; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York 1992), 229-369; and Daniel Feller, "Politics and Society: Toward a Jacksonian Synthesis," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Summer 1990), 135-162.

[38] William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists At Bay, 1776-1854* (New York 1990), esp. 39-58. Freehling applies this dichotomy only to the antebellum South. I believe that, with appropriate adjustments for regional diversity, it is a distinction that works reasonably well for the republic as whole during the early national and Jacksonian years.

cific trade skills as their "property," their source of independence, and in much of the South and Old Northwest, mere whiteness of skin seemed to qualify men as independent. These more generous, more inclusive definitions of independence tacitly permitted a fairly thorough democratization of antebellum political culture while leaving the most cherished of republican ideals theoretically intact. Americans continued to embrace "independence" as the essence of republican citizenship even as the prerequisites for independence were significantly redefined.[39]

If the frontier was only one of many factors which played a role in democratizing the political culture of American republicanism, it was clearly a crucial factor in sustaining a republican social order in the face of the "Market Revolution" that followed the War of 1812.[40] As Drew McCoy has emphasized, the availability of abundant western land allowed the young republic to grow economically by expanding through space, producing an ever larger agricultural surplus for market, rather than by developing over time, seeking profit through the intensification of commerce and industrialization. Because of the frontier, the republic sustained a huge and growing population of yeoman freeholders, while others (tenants and farm laborers) held a reasonable expectation of becoming yeoman freeholders, and still others (artisans and mechanics) identified themselves as the "yeomanry of the city." By slowing the process of proletarianization in pre-Civil War America, the frontier permitted egalitarian republicanism, with its insistence on independence as the basis for citizenship, to postpone for a generation its direct confrontation with the market revolution, industrialization, and a large, dependent working class.[41]

The role of the frontier as a "safety-valve" that allowed the republic to postpone crises by diffusing them across space has become a recurrent a theme in recent historical writing. Perhaps the most pro-

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[39] Pole, *Political Representation*, 332-338; Sean Wilentz, "Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement, 1790-1920," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 26 (Fall 1984), 1-24; Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "Republics and Democracy: The Parameters of Political Citizenship in Antebellum South Carolina," in David R. Chesnutt and Clyde N. Wilson, eds., *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.* (Columbia, S.C. 1991), 121-145.

[40] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York 1991), esp. 70-171.

[41] Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill 1980), 185-208, 236-259. See also Major L. Wilson, *Space, Time and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and Irrepressible Conflict, 1815-1861* (Westport, Conn. 1974), 49-72.

vocative modern criticism of Turner's overall thesis was developed by New Left historian Staughton Lynd in the 1960s.[42] Lynd attempted to recast Turner's thesis so that it could adequately explain antebellum sectional differences.[43] Turner, Lynd insisted, not only underestimated the influence of slavery on American life, but also mistakenly included slaveholders in the category of agrarians who championed the expansion of democracy. Lynd countered that southern slaveholders, obsessed with property rights and the defense of minority power, sought an alliance with the large capitalists of the North to preserve a conservative, aristocratic republic.[44] Moreover, Lynd suggested, the Constitution represented not a Beardian triumph of capitalists over agrarians, but an uneasy compromise between capitalists and slaveholders.[45] This compromise, tested periodically over three-score years and ten, eventually disintegrated in a bloody civil war. What is remarkable about the compromise of 1787 is not that it eventually collapsed, but that it lasted as long as it did. Doubtless an overriding desire to see the American experiment in republicanism succeed gave the compromise its strength, but according to Lynd and Barrington Moore, the frontier helped give the compromise longevity by allowing the free-labor economy of the North and the slave-labor economy of the South room to expand on parallel tracks without collision.[46]

To be sure, the "frontier," or the western territories, became in the nineteenth century what the slave trade was in the late eighteenth: the primary point of controversy between North and South.[47] But

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[42] See especially Staughton Lynd, "On Turner, Beard, and Slavery," *Journal of Negro History*, 48 (Oct. 1963), 235-250; and Lynd, "Beyond Beard," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Toward A New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York 1968), 46-64. See also Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution* (Indianapolis 1967).

[43] An earlier attempt to revise Turner along these lines was made in 1954 in two companion essays written by Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick. Part I of their essay on democracy in the old Northwest is cited in note sixteen above. See also "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part II: The Southwest Frontier and New England," *Political Science Quarterly*, 69 (Dec. 1954), 565-602.

[44] Lynd, "On Turner, Beard, and Slavery," 237-244.

[45] Lynd, "Beyond Beard," 58-60.

[46] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston 1966), 111-155; Lynd, "On Turner, Beard and Slavery," 235-250.

[47] On this point, see Robert M. Weir, "South Carolina: Slavery and the Structure of the Union," in Michael Allen Gillespie and Michael Lienesch, eds., *Ratifying The Constitution* (Lawrence, Kan. 1989), 201-234.

these controversies over Missouri, Texas, California, and Kansas all were settled, albeit with escalating difficulty, by compromise. The controversy over slavery in the territories often precipitated sectional crises during the antebellum era, yet the territories themselves were the safety-valve which prevented the show-down over slavery from occurring much earlier in the republic's history.[48] King Cotton coveted virgin land, and the frontier provided it. Proletarianization threatened the North's dynamic free-labor economy, but competition from newly settled areas encouraged outmigration from the older rural areas of the North. The "hidden depression" of the 1850s, which drove many former artisans and mechanics into wage labor just as the massive post-1848 wave of foreign immigration glutted the market, only served to make the situation more volatile. Therefore, the frontier loomed larger than ever in the minds of white northerners seeking a "safety-valve" to avoid dependency.[49] The Republican party's rallying cry of "free soil, free labor, free men" assumed a new ring of urgency, and pressure to ban slave competition from all territories intensified. Many northerners worried that the fabled upward mobility that Abraham Lincoln celebrated as the "right to rise" might be jeopardized permanently. Thus, despite impressive macroeconomic growth and rising personal incomes, Americans, North and South, were haunted by fears that their status as independent householders and their prospects for upward mobility were threatened unless they enjoyed continued access to the frontier.[50] By the late 1850s, in both regions, ideas about independence and opportunity had grown inextricably tied to the frontier, and the controversy over free or slave

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[48] Major L. Wilson, "The Controversy over Slavery Expansion and the Concept of the Safety Valve: Ideological Confusion in the 1850s," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 24 (Spring 1971), 135-153.

[49] Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 128-157; Jonathan Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983); Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass. 1976); Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Origins of the American Working Class," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 19 (Spring 1981), 1-22; Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, 31-50; Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York 1989), 354-380.

[50] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York 1971); Robert W. Johanssen, *The Frontier, the Union, and Stephen A. Douglas* (Urbana 1989), 249-252; Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "Toward A Divided Union," *Reviews in American History*, 18 (Sept. 1990), 349-356; Major L. Wilson, "The Free Soil Concept of Progress and the Irrepressible Conflict," *American Quarterly*, 22 (Winter 1970), 769-790.

labor—essentially a question of equal access to the frontier—proved the proximate cause of secession and Civil War.

Had the opportunity for parallel expansion across the shared frontier not existed, had not abundant land served as some kind of safety-valve for both North and South, it seems probable that the inherent contradictions between republican ideas and the material reality of both the slave and free labor economies would have been exposed much earlier, producing serious internal crises in both regions. These earlier crises, coming before the democratic revolution had extended full political rights to virtually all white men and established democratic politics as the realm of conflict resolution in the United States, might well have prompted what Barrington Moore has described as a reactionary coalition between northern capitalists and southern planters. This conservative coalition of propertied elites might have worked to stunt the evolution of political democracy and guide the republic down the repressive "Prussian Road" to industrial modernity.[51] Without the yeomanry of the frontier to draw upon, resistance to this reactionary coalition would have likely pushed upward from below, from hard-pressed artisans and the emerging working class, perhaps with some petty bourgeois assistance, in a kind of crude American approximation of the failed European revolutions of 1848.[52] Instead, the frontier delayed the crisis, giving the democratic revolution time to take hold and allowing the plain folk of both North and South time to identify prospects for continued independence and opportunity with the existence of the frontier. By the time the sectional tensions reached new heights late in the 1850s, the democratic revolution—which the frontier aided but did not cause—had done its work. The capitalists of the North knew it was free-soilers and workers they must placate and not southern slaveholders. Southern planters knew it was the tenaciously independent plain folk, not Yankee entrepreneurs, whom they must convince to sustain slavery. Neither propertied elite saw a reactionary alliance as a viable option in the face of intense political pressures from their respective beleaguered yeomanries.[53] The defining struggle of nineteenth-century America was not

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[51] Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 125-141; S.G.F. Spackman, "The Frontier and Reform in the United States," *The Historical Journal*, 8 (June 1970), 333-339.

[52] For a perspective on the European revolutions, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York 1979), 3-23.

[53] Thornton, *Politics and Power*, 398-461; Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*, 86-116; Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 338-373; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of*

between a national propertied elite and the producing masses over access to political power, but between sections equally devoted to independence and opportunity, each desperately needing the frontier to remake in their own image. The result of this struggle was the triumph of a liberal bourgeois democracy rather than the producers' republic for which the common folk, Union and Confederate, fought.[54] But in shifting the battle onto this ground, Turner's frontier not only helped save American democracy but pushed it to seek, albeit at a terribly high price in blood, a "new birth of freedom."[55]

Frontier Closure and the Involution of American Society, 1840-1890

Carville Earle and Changyong Cao

Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of frontier closure in 1890 has never quite squared with the facts.[1] All of the consequences that he envisioned for the turn of the century—closed space, sectional tension, labor unrest, and the ascent of central state power—had already surfaced by the middle third of the nineteenth century. On reexamination of the pace of frontier expansion between 1650 and 1890, a

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Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York 1988), 170-201; Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War* (New York 1992), 17-94.

[54] Eric Foner, "The Causes of the American Civil War: Recent Interpretations and New Directions," *Civil War History*, 20 (Sept. 1974), 197-214; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven 1985).

[55] Garry Wills, *Lincoln At Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York 1992), 121-147; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York 1988).

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[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *American Historical Association Annual Report for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C. 1894), 199-227.

case can be made that Turner's description of that process erred in at least two respects. Contrary to Turner's claims of a uniform or linear expansion, the frontier between 1650 and 1840 actually advanced in long-wave cycles of about a half century each. Contrary to his claim of frontier closure in 1890, the post-1840 deceleration of expansion suggests that closure had been achieved by mid-century. Such evidence invites a reconsideration of the causes and consequences of frontier closure a half century ahead of the Turnerian schedule. This essay offers some reflections on the emergent constraints on antebellum expansion, namely the opportunities afforded by an intensely developing or involutional society and the ecological impediments to extensive expansion. These involutional forces in particular came to the fore after 1840 and devalued the significance of the western frontier as they delineated new lines of cleavage—sectional strife, labor-capital conflict, and the power of the central government—for a maturing American democracy.

The historiography of the frontier thesis seems to have exhausted every avenue of inquiry save for the foundational premises of Turner's argument.[2] These premises consist of two explicit knowledge claims. The first holds that the frontier advanced ever westerly at a uniformly linear rate; the second, that the advance of settlement ceased and drew the frontier to a close during the 1880s.[3] As remarkable as it may seem, students of the American past have tested neither of these eminently testable claims. Assessing their accuracy merely requires some measurements of the areas settled by Americans at various dates before 1890 and the derivation from these of settlement

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[2] The literature on Turner's frontier thesis is voluminous. An admittedly incomplete bibliography on the subject cites over 1,300 entries between 1895 and 1983, with over 300 coming in the 1960s. *Frederick Jackson Turner: A Reference Guide*, ed. Vernon E. Mattson and William E. Marion (Boston 1985). A cogent review of the issues is Margaret Walsh's *The American Frontier Revisited* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1981). Turner's ghost hangs over even those who would reject his thesis in favor of an interpretation at once darker, more polyvocal, and partizanly nativist. For a concise summation of their issues and themes, see Alan Brinkley, "The Western Historians: Don't Fence Them In," *New York Times Book Review*, Sept. 20, 1992, 1, 22-24, 27, and the sources listed on 26.

[3] Historiography's failure in this regard is noted in Walsh, *The American Frontier Revisited*, 56, 60, 72. The nearest anyone has come to an assessment of rates of expansion is Fulmer Mood's heroic, if tortured, description of the moving line of the frontier. His words simply could not express the complexities of the process. See Fulmer Mood, "Studies in the History of American Settled Areas and Frontier Lines, 1625-1790," *Agricultural History*, 26 (Jan. 1952), 16-36. Subsequent discussions skirt the issue or rely on crude proxies such as land disposal or territorial acquisition.

expansion rates over the several intervals. Verification of Turner's premises depends, in the first instance, on a more or less steady rate of settlement expansion and, in the second, on a dramatic fall in these rates during the 1880s.

Skipping over the maze of cartographic and statistical technologies involved in these estimates, Table I reports for nineteen dates between 1650 and 1890 the areas settled at Turnerian densities of two persons or more per square mile. These figures are the raw material for Table II, which presents rates of settlement expansion, compounded annually, across the eighteen sequential map pairs. And these rates, in turn, define the historical curve of American settlement expansion from 1650 to 1890.[4]

The frontier described in numbers and curve could hardly have been more different than the one envisioned by Frederick Jackson Turner. All of the evidence for the period 1650-1840 points to an expansion that was more nearly cyclical than linear. For almost two centuries, American expansion rates rose and fell in a progression that mimicked the economy's cycle of long waves of nearly a half century. Settlement expanded vigorously (rising toward peaks between 2 and 3 percent per annum) during economic recovery and general prosperity (variously, the long upswing or the A phase), and then lapsed below 2 percent (to as low as 1 percent) during crisis and protracted economic depression—in, for examples, the 1680s, 1740s, 1780s, and 1830s-1840s. However the goodness of fit between long waves and American frontier expansion, the main point is this: expansion followed a cyclical procession, advancing very rapidly at some times and very slowly at others. This implies not a single

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[4] The sources and procedures for these estimates of settled area are presented in full in Carville Earle and Changyong Cao, "The Rate of Frontier Expansion in American History, 1650-1890," in *GIS and the Social Sciences: A Handbook*, ed. Carville Earle, Leonard Hochberg, and David Miller (forthcoming). Reduced to essentials, the procedure involves measuring the area of settlement at various times and calculating the absolute and relative increases in area over sequential maps. We use Friis's population maps before 1790, and Paullin's and Wright's thereafter. See Herman R. Friis, "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790," *American Geographical Society, Mimeographed Publication No. 3* (New York 1940); and Charles O. Paullin and John K. Wright, eds., *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (Washington, D.C. 1932). Using Turner's threshold density of two persons or more per square mile can be criticized, but increasing the threshold has little effect on the results. For the critique, see John Fraser Hart, "The Spread of the Frontier and the Growth of Population," in *Man and Cultural Heritage: Papers in Honor of Fred B. Kniffen*, ed. H. J. Walker and W. G. Haag (Baton Rouge 1974), 73-81.

Table I

Settled Area of the United States, 1650-1890

Date	Settled Area (In thousands of square miles)
1650	14,561
1675	30,220
1700	39,511
1720	52,068
1740	99,014
1760	137,484
1770	167,567
1780	223,211
1790	261,954
1800	306,413
1810	414,517
1820	523,183
1830	637,781
1840	827,247
1850	988,634
1860	1,095,943
1870	1,098,251
1880	1,305,144
1890	1,455,625

Source: see note 4.

frontier process, but a variety of frontier experiences in which the pace of expansion profoundly influenced demographic composition, economic mobility and the opportunities for political participation on the periphery of American settlement.[5]

However interesting the theme of plural frontiers in American history, it plays second fiddle in this essay to Turner's claims about frontier closure. Graph I dates this decisive change to the 1840s, a

[5] The implications of plural frontiers and the relations of long waves and frontier expansion are explored in more detail in Earle and Cao, "The Rate of Frontier Expansion."

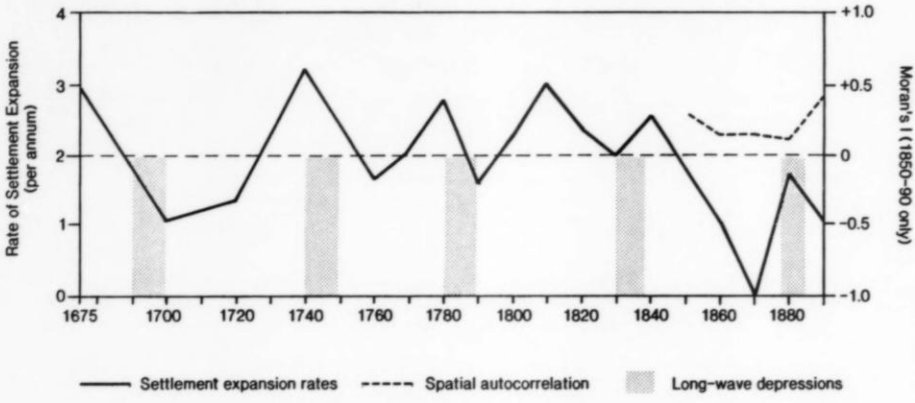
Table II
Annual Rate of Settlement Expansion

Date	Rate of Settlement Expansion (compounded annually)
1650-1675	2.96
1675-1700	1.06
1700-1720	1.39
1720-1740	3.26
1740-1760	1.64
1760-1770	2.05
1770-1780	2.80
1780-1790	1.60
1790-1800	2.29
1800-1810	3.07
1810-1820	2.36
1820-1830	2.00
1830-1840	2.64
1840-1850	1.80
1850-1860	1.04
1860-1870	0.02
1870-1880	1.74
1880-1890	1.10

Source: see note 4.

half century earlier than Turner imagined. In the aftermath of the nation's most vigorous cycle of expansion (1790-1840), the centrifugal engine shut down and the rate of expansion plunged below two percent and remained there for the ensuing half century. Declaring categorically the closure of the frontier in the 1840s, of course, overstates the case, but there can be little doubt that the rate of expansion had decelerated to a point tantamount to closure.[6] As if to underscore

[6] What was true for the nation was true, more or less, for the regional systems



Graph I. Annual Rates of Settlement Expansion, 1650-1890, and Spatial Concentration, 1850-1890.

Spatial concentration after 1840, as measured by the spatial autocorrelation statistic Moran's I, is highest in long-wave depressions (1890) or immediately thereafter (1850) and lowest in the intervening years of prosperity (1860, 1870, 1880).

Source: Earle and Cao, "The Rate of Frontier Expansion in American History, 1650-1890," in *GIS and the Social Sciences: A Handbook*, ed. Carville Earle, Leonard Hochberg, and David Miller (Basil Blackwell, forthcoming).

frontier closure, American settlement concurrently experienced a powerful ratcheting; the extensive expansion of two centuries suddenly gave way to the intensive and involutional dynamics of a maturing society. These seismic shifts notwithstanding, the half-century cycling of settlement processes continued (Graph I), but in place of

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therein. Regional frontiers also decelerated dramatically. Of the 47 regional cases west of the Appalachians between 1840 and 1890, only 11 exceeded an expansion rate of two percent per annum; and of these, 3 of 6 did so in the 1840s, 1 of 6 in the 1850s, 0 of 12 in the 1860s, 3 of 12 in the 1870s, and 4 of 11 in the 1880s. The modest resurgence of the frontier in these last two decades had its loci in the hinterlands of St. Louis (1870s) and Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul (1880s).

cyclically variable rates of frontier expansion, the new regime cycled the populations of settled regions, concentrating them during or soon after prominent economic depressions (1850 and 1890) and dispersing them in the long interval of prosperity.[7] In this case, unlike earlier frontier expansions, the cycle of concentration and dispersion suggests a spatial trend that reinforced the dominance and power of an expanding core region anchored in the Northeast and the Midwest. By 1890, after four decades of involution, Americans were half again as concentrated as in 1850 and over twice as concentrated as in 1860, 1870, and 1880.

The half-century cycling of American population thus persisted after the closure of the frontier in the 1840s, but with a difference. Americans subsequently crowded together in times of depression, dispersed in times of prosperity, and, in the long run, voted with their feet for the hegemony of the northern core over a prostrate South and a devalued West.[8]

Having foreshortened Turner's frontier by a half century or so, it may seem odd then to argue that this is less a rebuttal than a temporal amendment to Turner's thesis—but such is indeed the case. If Turner's timing was off, his interpretation of frontier closure may apply with even greater force to the u-turn American society took in the middle third of the nineteenth century. Mindful of Turner's often uncanny insights, we shift the scene from the Age of Reform to the middle period, and there look anew at the convergence of events that simultaneously closed the American frontier and massively involuted the society behind it.

The closure of the frontier in 1890 seemed self-evident to Turner, and he did not waste much time belaboring the obvious impediments of aridity and mountainous terrain. Moving back the date of frontier closure to the 1840s, however, poses a whole new series of problems—

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[7] Graph I describes this new cycle of concentration and dispersion using the metric of spatial autocorrelation. That metric, among other things, offers a concise description of spatial distributions in which a value of 1 equals complete concentration, 0 equals pure randomness, and minus 1 equals complete dispersion (and a regular pattern). The curve in Graph I thus cycles from concentration in 1850 to dispersion to concentration in 1890. The cycle's endurance after 1890 is currently under review. On spatial autocorrelation, see Daniel A. Griffith, *Spatial Autocorrelation: A Primer* (Washington, D.C. 1987).

[8] In this paper, the "core" refers to the union of the northeastern and midwestern states, cornered somewhat generously by New England, Maryland, Missouri, and Iowa-Wisconsin. For more specifics, see David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York 1971), 11-49.

and opportunities. Closure cannot be explained away by environmental inhospitality alone. Good land, fertile and productive, remained in abundance, and people to settle it (native and immigrant) were evermore numerous—some 23.5 million more in 1890 than in 1840.[9] Accordingly, the causes of frontier closure, especially if it occurred in the 1840s, are hardly so obvious as Turner believed. In this the first attempt to interpret frontier closure in the 1840s, the modest aim is one of pulling together what would seem to have been the principal constraints on expansion. What follows is a provisional explanatory sketch accenting a few promising lines of argument that comprehends at once the processes of frontier closure and demographic involution.

The 1840s is in several respects a curious turning point for the closure of the frontier. In the period just ahead, the nation would add a vast amount of territory—some 1.3 million square miles between 1845 and 1853.[10] And in the recent past, 1790-1840, Americans had exploded onto the frontier at the phenomenal rate of 2.47 percent per annum. In this context of rapid settlement and acquisition of new land, the sudden (and enduring) collapse of the frontier seems paradoxical indeed. The explanation can be reduced to two emergent constraints on settlement: 1) the pull of unprecedented opportunity in older regional economies; and 2) the push of an equally unprecedented series of agroecological adjustments made necessary by the semi-arid grasslands of the Great Plains.

In the 1840s, as if spent by five decades of gluttonous expansion, Americans redirected their energies from the frontier to the elaboration of maturing regional economies in spaces previously settled. This involutional story is, in part, a familiar one of high returns to antebellum regional specialization in the South, Northeast, and Midwest and, in two cases, to cumulative growth through economic interdependence.

Opportunities abounded in the urban-industrial Northeast during the 1840s and 1850s.[11] Anchored by the entrepôt cities of an incipient

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[9] Less than one-third of the coterminous area of the United States as of 1860 had been settled by 1840. See Table I and *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1989*, (109th ed. Washington, D.C. 1989), 7; and for population figures, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (2 vols., Washington, D.C. 1975), I, 14.

[10] *The Encyclopedia of American History*, ed. Richard B. Morris (1947; rev. ed., New York 1970), 441.

[11] For an overview of the achievements of the northeastern economy, see Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (1961; rep., New York 1966), 156-176; Allan R. Pred, *The Spatial Dynamics of U.S. Urban-Industrial*

megalopolis, the region rapidly advanced in urbanization (35 percent in 1860 as compared to 20 percent in 1840) and industrialization (three fourths of the nation's manufacturing value added by 1860).[12] Owing to high rates of return to manufactures and commodity marketing, the Northeast's expansive labor force soon tested the region's capacity for food provision. Domestic demand, augmented by new markets in Britain following the repeal of the corn laws in 1846, stimulated a rush of rail construction from the coastal cities to the eastern hem of the Midwest. Through-rail lines to Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and Wheeling joined with the Erie Canal in speeding midwestern corn, wheat, livestock, and meat to eastern and British markets.[13]

In less than a decade, these new lines of conveyance effectively severed the Midwest's southern trade and regrafted it to the Northeast. This reorientation of interregional trade hastened the pace of economic intensification in the Old Northwest. By 1860, that region contained over a third of the nation's rail mileage, produced nearly half its wheat, and housed three of its eight largest cities.[14] The foundation for this achievement rested with agriculture made profitable because of lower transport costs. Rates of return to farming proved highly competitive and farm productivity advanced steadily. In the case of wheat, the region's premier cash crop, yields per acre doubled or trebled between 1800 and 1860 and per capita output doubled over

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Growth, 1800-1914: Interpretive and Theoretical Essays (Cambridge, Mass. 1966); Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States Systems of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge, Mass. 1973); David R. Meyer, "Emergence of the American Manufacturing Belt: An Interpretation," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 9 (Apr. 1983), 145-174; and Diane Lindstrom, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850* (New York 1978).

[12] North, *The Economic Growth of the United States*, 258. New England and the Middle Atlantic states account for 28.0 percent and 43.9 percent, respectively, of the nation's value added in manufacturing in 1860—or 71.9 percent altogether. Albert W. Niemi, Jr., *State and Regional Patterns in American Manufacturing, 1860-1900* (Westport, Conn. 1974), 14.

[13] See, for example, Albert Fishlow, *American Railroads and the Transformation of the Ante-bellum Economy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965).

[14] Carville Earle, "Regional Economic Development West of the Appalachians, 1815-1860," in *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, ed. Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves (Totowa, N.J. 1987), 172-197. On the rise of regional manufactures and urbanization, see David R. Meyer, "Midwestern Industrialization and the American Manufacturing Belt in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Economic History*, 49 (Dec. 1989), 921-937; and Edward K. Muller, "Selective Urban Growth in the Middle Ohio Valley, 1800-1860," *Geographical Review*, 66 (Apr. 1976), 178-199.

the same span. The lure of profits quickly diverted people's attention from the frontier to the manifold opportunities at home, even for rural laborers whose numbers increased rapidly during these decades.[15]

In the South the post-1840 turn from the frontier is equally evident if somewhat obscured by enduring images of soil-mining, footloose planters. Although the notion of soil-abusing southerners exhausting land and moving on to the frontier may have substance before 1840, after that date southerners increasingly stayed at home for two good reasons: the rising rates of return on plantations and, more significantly, the installation of a novel soil-conserving agroecological system.[16] Cotton planters in the 1840s introduced a system that rotated cotton with corn intercropped with leguminous (nitrogen-fixing) cowpeas. This system effectively maintained soil fertility, provided ample household subsistence (corn and pork), and earned profits equal to or greater than the monocultural system that it increasingly displaced.

The involutional implications of southern crop rotation proved far-reaching. By ensuring self-sufficiency in the cotton belt, the system blunted demands for provisions from the Midwest and the Upper South. And by mitigating soil exhaustion and erosion, it obviated outmigration to the frontier.[17] To these involutional constraints may be added a third—the slaveholders' "rent-seeking" desire to protect

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[15] Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames, Iowa 1987), 247-266; Earle, "Regional Economic Development West of the Appalachians," 172-197; Robert Gallman, "Changes in Total U.S. Agricultural Factor Productivity in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History*, 46 (Jan. 1972), 191-210; and David E. Schob, *Hired Hands and Plowboys: Farm Labor in the Midwest, 1815-1860* (Urbana 1975).

[16] On rates of return to cotton planters, see Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross* (Boston 1974); and Richard K. Vedder and David C. Stockdale, "The Profitability of Slavery Revisited: A Different Approach," *Agricultural History*, 49 (Apr. 1975), 392-404. And for the soil-conserving strategy of crop rotation, see Carville Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems* (Stanford, Cal. 1992), 258-299; and Earle, "The Price of Precocity: Technical Choice and Ecological Constraint in the Cotton South, 1840-1890," *Agricultural History*, 66 (Summer 1992), 25-60.

[17] For the impacts on interregional trade, see Erik F. Haites, James Mak, and Gary M. Walton, *Western River Transportation: The Era of Early Internal Development, 1810-1860* (Baltimore 1975); and on the increasing self-sufficiency of the Lower South, see Sam B. Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale, Ill. 1972). Geographical mobility persisted in the South, but migrants seem to have moved into nearby areas such as the Upland South instead of to the frontier.

the value of capital assets. Restraints on southern expansion, as Roger Ransom observes, enabled slaveowners to restrict cotton supply, maintain cotton prices, and prop up the value of their slaves.[18] Whatever the precise causes, southern frontier expansion effectively collapsed after 1840; by 1860, returns to cotton were more than competitive, incomes per capita had risen, slaves increased sharply in value, and the door to the southern frontier had slammed closed.[19]

Replacing the footloose southerner with a home-bound variant further challenges historiography by contradicting fears of a slave-power conspiracy. Southern behavior offers little evidence of expansionary designs on the frontier or in territorial geopolitics. This is not to say that northern fears of slavery were wrong, but simply misplaced. The dangers of slavery extension lay not so much in a conspiracy of expansionist southerners as in the effects of staple economics that favored slavery over free labor in the emergent corn belt of the lower Midwest.[20] Putting this ominous hypothesis to the test, Dumas Van Deren pronounced for his fellow Illinoians in 1854 a "full and candid preference in favor of slave labor in agricultural business . . . . We have discovered that the novelty of free labor is a mere humbug. We have been endeavoring to learn the sentiments of our people upon this subject, and have been astonished to see with what unanimity they express themselves in favor of the introduction

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[18] The debate on southern rent-seeking and the propensity for expansion is summarized in Roger L. Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation, and the American Civil War* (Cambridge, Eng. 1989), 53-60. Also, Peter Passell and Gavin Wright, "The Effects of Pre-Civil War Territorial Expansion on the Price of Slaves," *Journal of Political Economy*, 80 (Nov.-Dec. 1972), 1188-1202; Susan Previant Lee, *The Westward Movement of the Cotton Economy, 1840-1860: Perceived Interests and Economic Interests* (New York 1977); and Mark Schmitz and Donald Schaefer, "Paradox Lost: Westward Expansion and Slave Prices before the Civil War," *Journal of Economic History*, 41 (June 1981), 402-407.

[19] Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise*, esp. 41-81.

[20] Passell and Wright, "The Effects of Pre-Civil War Territorial Expansion," 1188-1202; Lee, *The Westward Movement*; and Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems*, 226-257. On the significance of the Midwest, and more particularly Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio in the sectional politics of the 1840s and 1850s, see *ibid*; Paul Finkleman, "Slavery, the 'More Perfect Union,' and the Prairie State," *Illinois Historical Journal*, 80 (Winter 1987), 248-269; Finkleman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 6 (Winter 1986), 343-370; and Donald W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Volume II: Continental America, 1806-1867* (New Haven 1993), 431-528.

of slave labor.''[21] If slavery endangered the nation—and the economics of the lower Midwest suggest that it did—the dangers were greatest in the old states rather than the new, and from corn-belt farmers in the Midwest rather than home-bound planters in the South. In this context, Lincoln's ''House Divided'' constituted an acknowledgment of the political consequences of frontier closure and spatial involution on the eve of the Civil War.

If involutional opportunities encouraged Americans to stay closer to home, the rigors of what lay to the west helped keep them there. For people accustomed to humid lands, the semiaridity that awaited them in the Great Plains posed enormous difficulties for settlement. Aside from the scarcities of timber, fuel, and water, settlers on this new frontier coped with the steep costs of sod-busting and the high risks of crop failure caused by the sizable variations in annual precipitation. Indeed, many regarded the Plains to be a hazardous zone of aridity—a Great American Desert—which in josephite dry cycles it in fact was. All of these problems, along with the fears of Indian attack, further conspired against rapid settlement by wet-land farmers.[22]

These inexorables punctured the cycle of American frontier expansion. Compare, for example, the sharp differences in frontier population growth on the Plains and adjacent humid lands. Population growth in Illinois 1830-1850, for example, exceeded frontier Iowa's by just three and a half fold. But as settlement edged into the Plains (1840-1860), growth in humid Missouri and Iowa surpassed semiarid Kansas and Nebraska by sixfold and 22-fold, respectively.[23] Small wonder that Congress soon resorted to giving the land away—through the the Homestead Act (1862) and vast land grants for railroads which, for the first time, preceded the march of spontaneous settlement. Coupled to an aggressive policy of Indian pacification,[24] these bold measures nevertheless failed to reopen the western frontier

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[21] Van Deren's remarks are cited in Arthur C. Cole, *Lincoln's ''House Divided'' Speech: Did it Reflect a Doctrine of Class Struggle? An Address Delivered Before the Chigaco Historical Society, March 15, 1923* (Chicago 1923), 32-33. For further evidence of proslavery sentiment in the corn belt, see Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems*, 242-257, and sources cited therein.

[22] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (New York 1931). Also see James C. Malin, *The Grasslands of North America: Prolegomena to Its History with Addenda* (1947; rep., Gloucester, Mass. 1967); and D. Aidan McQuillan, *Prevailing Over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875-1925* (Lincoln 1990).

[23] *Historical Statistics*, I, 24-36.

[24] See, among others, Richard White, *''It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own'': A New History of the American West* (Norman 1991).

save for a modest (and ironic) burst of activity in the 1880s on the eve of Turner's thesis. Judged in the context of the frontier's closure in the 1840s, the contest for control of the Great Plains seem far less compelling as the crucible of the Civil War. And while partisans to the conflict tried hard to get settlers into the region, their efforts met with remarkably little success.[25]

The demise of frontier expansion in the 1840s reflects a conjuncturing of two powerful constraints: the disinterest of a prospering involutional East and the massive and costly agroecological adjustments incumbent upon settlers of a semiarid grassland. The eastern states turned inward, focusing energies on maturing regional economies and their own opportunities and disequilibrations—not least of which was the prospect of slavery's expansion into the free states of the American Midwest. It was in the East, and not on the frontier, that these involutional issues would be joined and, by the force of war, resolved.[26]

Most of the consequences of frontier closure that Turner envisioned for the 1890s had come to pass before that date. Indeed, involution, sectional strife, the ascent of a centralized national government, and the rise of labor unrest were all underway by 1865. Take the case of sectional strife and Turner's curious opinions about it. Turner repeatedly devalued the slavery debate, passing it off as a lamentable "incident" that polarized otherwise civil debates over more critical matters—tariffs, land, and internal improvement.[27]

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[25] The consensus on the critical role of the territories in the coming of the Civil War approaches orthodoxy even among the best and most balanced assessments of the period. For examples, see David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York 1976); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York 1970); and James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York 1988).

[26] All of which initiated the century-long eclipse of the West, which helps explain the arch pessimism of perhaps its greatest expositor. "What," Walter Webb lamented, "is the biographer going to do for a region that has so few men of distinction? What is the historian going to do with a country almost without chronology or important battles or great victories . . . ? How can he make a thick history out of such thin material?" Webb, "The American West: A Perpetual Mirage," *Harper's Magazine*, 214 (Jan. 1957), 25-31.

[27] Turner's thoughts on the ramifications of frontier closure—involution in another word—are most fully developed in his classic essay "The Significance of the Section in American History," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 8 (Mar. 1925), 255-280. Turner's devaluation of the slavery issue in the coming of the Civil War is evident throughout *The Frontier in American History* (New York 1920). "Writers have discussed the subjects of the tariff, land, and internal improvement, as subsidiary to the slave question. But when American history is rightly viewed it will be seen," Turner confided, "that the slavery question is an incident." *Ibid*, 24.

When repositioned in the context of frontier closure in the 1840s, however, Turner's disinterest in the nation's greatest sectional struggle seems glib indeed. The ensuing involution of regional economies and the heady and disequilibrating pace of economic growth provided a fertile seedbed for uncompromising sectional strife—not to mention all of the evidence for sectionalism for which Turner sought in vain after 1890.[28] Had Turner realized that the frontier was closed by 1860, might he have elevated the historiographic status of the slavery debate from an episodic "incident" to a logical consequent of frontier closure? If so, it follows that Turner would have been compelled to look anew at the sectional crisis and its role in the ascent of national government and central state power. To be sure, Turner acknowledged (however grudgingly) the national government as one of the guarantors of democracy in post-frontier America, but he regarded it, like slavery, as adventitious to frontier and section.[29] We now know the converse to be true—that Turner's sections and the balance of power among them were fundamentally restructured by the consolidation of central state power that resulted from the Yankee victory and the ensuing aggrandizement of regional economic power in the northern core.[30]

The Civil War smashed once and for all the triadic sectionalism that had prevailed in the early republic and replaced it with a powerful central state radiating, as it were, hegemony from a northern core out over a dependent periphery. In this unequal developmental framework, the vanquished South lay prostrate (kept there by Radical Reconstruction), the tattered frontier in the West slipped from prominence, and the northern core enjoyed a massive accrual of population, income, and wealth, fostered in part by policies and actions of

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[28] Turner, "The Significance of the Section," 255-280.

[29] In a post-frontier America, Turner placed his faith in sectional politics as a means for restraining "national government" and averting, in the worst case, the Prussian road. See various references in *The Frontier in American History*, esp. 321.

[30] Richard F. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge, Eng. 1990). The core's accumulation of economic power involves regional extension from the Northeast into the Midwest—a process initiated in the 1840s. By 1900, the expanded core accounts for over 83 percent of the nation's value added in manufacturing, the Midwest alone contributing 26 percent. Niemi, *State and Regional Patterns in Manufacturing*, 15; and Meyer, "Midwestern Industrialization," 921-937. Population surfaces reveal a similar process of core concentration and extension into the Midwest. Earle and Cao, "The Rate of Frontier Expansion."

the central government.[31] Finance capitalists in the core soon encountered resistance, however, in the form of labor unrest—which was the third and last of Turner's consequences of frontier closure. The curve of labor protest began its ascent in the 1850s, as urban workers in the Northeast and Midwest insisted on an increasing share of the profits of economic involution. Some of the protests might relate to the closure of a frontier "safety valve" of free land, but most were traceable to labor market restructurings in the course of involutional growth within the northern core. Before 1840, workers had confronted two asymetric labor markets—a larger and more powerful rural market, in which wages were set by competitive market forces, and a much smaller urban market, in which the bid level for unskilled wages was established by the annual earnings of rural workers. And since rural earnings were relatively low owing to the seasonality of rural employment in grain production, urban entrepreneurs reaped a dividend in the form of cheap unskilled labor.[32] Frontier closure and involution, however, reconfigured these markets. Urbanization and industrialization expanded the size and autonomy of increasingly competitive urban labor markets, the emergence of which was resisted (ironically) by urban entrepreneurs seeking to keep wages low.[33] Far from inaugurating labor unrest at the end of the nineteenth century, the closure of the frontier spawned a much earlier process of worker protest that actually helped clarify the workings of urban labor markets.[34] Manufacturers and businessmen, it seems, were dragged kicking and

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[31] Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 83, 238-365, 416-436.

[32] On the workings of asymetric American labor markets before 1860, see Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems*, 173-225, 315-328, and 400-416. For evidence of labor exploitation, see Richard K. Vedder, Lowell E. Galloway, and David Klingaman, "Discrimination and Exploitation in Antebellum American Cotton Textile Manufacturing," *Research in Economic History*, 3 (1978), 217-262.

[33] The non-agricultural labor force in the United States expanded rapidly after 1820, and by 1880 it exceeded the size of the agricultural labor force. *Historical Statistics*, I, 134. By 1900, 80 percent of American manufacturing employment was located in the core. Niemi, *State and Regional Patterns in Manufacturing*, 130.

[34] The entrepreneurial resistance to marginalist economic principles seems odd today when neoclassicsm has become something of an article of faith for the American business community. See Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems*, 412, n. 18. On labor unrest after 1850 and its concentration in the core, see *ibid*, 346-445; Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York 1976); and David Gordon, "Capitalist Development and the History of American Cities," in *Marxism and the Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy*, ed. William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers (New York 1978), 21-63.

screaming into the domain of competitive markets which their rhetoric otherwise revered.[35]

The 1840s signaled a bold turning point in American history. The frontier cycle, henceforth constrained by the ecological novelty of the Great Plains and the unprecedented economic opportunities to the east, drew to a close and the ensuing cycle of involution entrained a series of profound restructurings. The elaboration of properous regional economies created disequilibration and sectional conflict that fostered the ascent of a powerful central state anchored in a hegemonic industrial core (the Northeast and the Midwest) that in turn sparked hostile conflicts between labor and capital over the distribution of the core's industrial largesse.[36] To be sure, these involutional processes were still being worked out in 1893 when Turner penned his famous essay; but what he saw as the preliminaries of frontier closure were in fact the tailings of a first involutional cycle. The next half-century from 1890 to 1940 would turn out rather differently than Turner imagined. It was less the story of the emergent tensions between sections, the national government, and labor and capital and more a tale of the consolidation of a corporatist, metropolitan America (underlined by the trend toward population concentration) centered on and directed from the northeastern quadrant of the United States and of the continuing struggle within this core region over sharing the fruits of a hegemony achieved in the cycle between 1840 and 1890.[37]

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[35] The extent of labor's victory by the 1920s is open to debate. Certainly skilled workers in trade unions had made a great deal of progress; workers elsewhere, in mass production industries for example, much less. Nonetheless, marginalist thought had made the crossing from Europe and was influencing both the movers and the students of the American economy. See, for examples, Sam A. Lewisohn, *The New Leadership in Industry* (New York 1926); and Daniel M. G. Raff, "Wage Determination and the Five-Dollar Day at Ford," *Journal of Economic History*, 48 (June 1988), 387-399.

[36] The involutional dialectic left many problems unresolved, however. The hegemony of the core's triumphant political economy, as Bensel notes, was hedged around by the reintegration of the South into national politics which, in turn, fettered core expansion and its capacity to address the internal tensions dividing labor and capital not to mention calls for social democracy. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 416-436.

[37] On the emergence of this new policy paradigm, with its emphasis on elite redistribution of domestic resources and protectionist principles abroad, see Richard L. McCormick, "The Party Period and Public Policy: An Explanatory Hypothesis," *Journal of American History*, 66 (Sept. 1979), 279-298; Theodore J. Lowi, "Four Systems of Policy, Politics and Choice," *Public Administration Review*, 32 (July/August, 1972), 298-310; and Louis Galambos, *America at Middle Age: A New History of the*

Given these dynamics, it is not surprising that the politics of the nation became the politics of the core. Insofar as presidential residence serves as a barometer of regional power, the core prevailed. All fifteen of the elected presidents between 1861 and 1924 resided in core states, and all but Herbert Hoover did so until 1964—some six score years after the closing of the frontier and the involutional u-turn of American society. Since then the South and West have risen again, all of which seems a fitting context for their renascent, if sometimes blindered, historiographies.[38]

Frederick Jackson Turner and the Significance of the Public Domain in American History

Malcolm J. Rohrbough

"The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."
Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893

Frederick Jackson Turner's love affair with what he called the "American frontier" had the touch of a visionary poet mixed with the practical application of a tax assessor. On the one side, he com-

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United States in the Twentieth Century (New York 1983). For the constraints on the core, see Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 416-436.

[38] Presidential residence comes from *Encylcopedia of American History*. In their calls for greater attention to the West, the new western historians seem oblivious to the possibility that historiographic neglect may have a basis in fact. Historians can hardly be blamed for overlooking a region which, in the context of national affairs midcentury past to midcentury present, didn't really matter very much — which is precisely Walter P. Webb's point. For the hagiographic converse, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Case of the Premature Departure: The Trans-Mississippi West and American History Textbooks," *Journal of American History*, 78 (Mar. 1992), 1380-1394.

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posed an heroic saga about a continent of unimagined riches and a people both anxious to seize them and deserving of them. Thus, he could stand at the close of the eighteenth century at the Cumberland Gap and document the parade of Anglo-Saxon peoples on the march; two generations later and fifteen hundred miles to the West, he could chronicle a similar parade at South Pass.

Yet beyond this Homeric vision of a continent and its European occupation over the course of three hundred years lay his practical middle western roots. When Turner talked in specifics (as opposed to the visionary), he had reference to the area that he knew so well, the Middle West of his youth and his university. In a real sense, Turner distilled the issue of land for an entire nation into the rich topsoils of Illinois, Iowa, and southern Wisconsin. Here he worked out in clear and direct form the vision of a people taking the land, turning it to their own uses, and creating in two generations a new democratic and egalitarian world. It was from this experience that Turner derived his understanding of the public domain and, at the same time, his naive sense of the operation of the land system that would make the public domain available to all, whether native-born, immigrants, former slaves, or even women. In his idealized world, everyone could participate in this great triumph of economic democracy, except of course, Native Americans, those "savages" who had failed to make effective use of this future Garden of Eden.[1]

Born in 1861, Turner grew up in an agricultural world of individual farms and farm families, steeped in the myth of the pre-emption and homestead acts and at the same time plagued by almost continuous economic depression. He went to graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, where he absorbed the seminar method of training in the new historical profession, and he learned about the significance of German tribes as the source of American democratic institutions. When he returned to his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin, as an instructor in the department of history, he found himself in another context, a long way from the German forests and the concern of eastern scholars with politics, slavery, and European antecedents.[2]

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[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (1920; rep., New York, 1953), 1-38, is the basic text. This collection also contains four other essays in which Turner alluded to the public domain. These are "The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay," "The Old West," "The Middle West," and "The Significance of the Mississippi Valley in American History."

[2] Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York 1973), chs. 1-3.

The University of Wisconsin in the decade of the 1890s mirrored the Middle West as a place of rising concern about inequalities in the economy at many levels and in several forms (whether land ownership or railroad freight rates). To these concerns the university added powerful reformist responses. This stimulus to reform permeated the state of Wisconsin, resulting in the ferment of ideas and causes that would produce the Progressivism of Robert M. La Follette and a deeply held belief that the university should be a servant to the state and its citizens. Both were impulses that fit well into Turner's own sense of America as a different place characterized by widespread popular participation in formulating solutions to the problems of the day.[3]

Mixed with these influences was the vague sense that the American experience itself was undergoing great change. The agricultural Middle West had been in a condition of economic depression—except for a few isolated years—since the close of the Civil War, and the rural America of farms and small towns seemed to be in decline. In the ascendancy were great industrial combinations identified with big cities that increasingly controlled the economic life of the nation and economic opportunity for the future. Young people had begun to leave farms and small towns in search of these opportunities. Surrounded by this sense of change and clash of values (small towns and large cities, new immigrants and old settlers, small shops and large factories, the individual farm and the Chicago Stock Yards), Turner found his inspiration in the report of the superintendent of the census.[4]

The declaration of the superintendent, that there was no longer a line of settlement advance visible on the census, suggested to Turner the end of a long chapter in American history, one that had extended over almost three centuries. The implications of the close of this period of American life arrested the attention of the young professional historian already interested in the American traits of the nation, and he reacted by spelling out his own special response. To the extent that he focused on the settlement lines of movement to the West, Turner also spotlighted the significance of the public domain and its availability in American history. It was, after all, the existence of so much land on such attractive (if varied) terms that had led families to move westward across what would become a continental nation. It is true

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[3] *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

[4] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 1.

that, contrary to popular belief, the land was not always "free" and it was not always "public" in the sense in which people understood the term at the close of the nineteenth century. But the presence of so much land for so long, in whatever form, had helped to define the movement of people west, from high tide on the James River in Virginia at the opening of seventeenth century to high tide on San Francisco Bay in California at the opening of the twentieth century. So Turner had an opportunity to identify the American qualities that he sought and to note a dramatic change that was associated with the 1890s, a decade when the nation would be burdened by one of the great economic depressions of its history.[5]

Turner's celebrated essay of 1893 included in its vaguely worked out thesis several ideas central to the influence of the public domain. He would return again and again to these over the next thirty years. To begin with, he saw that the presence of a huge expanse of free land played an immediate and vital role in the emergence of an American spirit developed independent of European influences. As he wrote about the study of America's past, "Too exclusive attention has been paid by institutional students to the Germanic origins, too little to the American factors." Turner seized upon the "existence of an area of free land" as an explanation for "American development." Then, too, the widespread availability of land also helped to explain the general happiness of the nation and its citizens. He would later quote with approval the words of Albert Gallatin: "If the cause of the happiness of this country was examined into, it would be found to arise as much from the great plenty of land in proportion to the inhabitants, which their citizens enjoyed as from the wisdom of their political institutions." And, finally, Turner found in the public domain a splendid example of the working out of American democracy. The widespread availability of land through public sale to individual citizens represented economic democracy, and where this generous system failed, Turner described with approval the ways in which individuals and families seized the land in violation of the law because it belonged to them as a part of the nation. In his account, the actions of "squatters" forced a reexamination of the nation's land laws and generated changes to bring about ever more generous terms on which land would be made available to the citizens of the republic.[6]

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[5] *Ibid.*, esp., 1, 25, 26.
[6] *Ibid.*, 3, 191 (quotation).

In his essay, Turner recognized the significance of the Ordinance of 1785 in establishing the structure for land disposal in the new nation, and he generalized that its success reflected a quality associated with the frontier experience. "Administratively the frontier called out some of the highest and most vitalizing activities of the general government," he wrote. He was right about the vitality of the issue. The postal service, relations with Native Americans, and the public domain were the areas of greatest federal influence on the frontier, and of these, the public domain was the most significant in terms of numbers and the breadth of the administrative system.[7]

Turner also remarked upon the differences between the European and American land systems. He wrote, "The policy in the United States of dealing with its lands is in sharp contrast with the European system of scientific administration." In truth, the differences were not so much in the systems as in the availability and in the widespread distribution of this critical resource. Turner talked occasionally of the public domain as a source of revenue, but the report of Thomas Donaldson confirmed that in the first century, the costs of administering the public domain far exceeded the revenues realized from their disposal. The American land system represented a retail system of distributing land to individual farm families. It was clearly not run at a profit, at least not in the first century of its operations.[8]

Over the next forty years, in a single book and a series of essays, Turner proceeded to work out in fragmentary form the significance of the public lands in American history. The colonial period, where he began, was distant from familiar terrain of the Middle West, but he struggled to cover its varied aspects of land distribution. He used the colonial period to weave a sense of continuity into the frontier experience, i.e., that the first cattle drives took place in the Carolinas of the colonial period, and that the seeds of national land policy lay in the colonial experience.[9]

Turner began by sounding the theme of land as a means of wealth and status, and he believed that its uneven distribution in colonial America reflected the lack of democracy in colonial societies. To this end, he attacked the absentee proprietors of colonial towns. He saw that the establishment of great landed estates, especially in the colo-

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[7] *Ibid.*, 25.

[8] *Ibid.*, 26; Thomas Donaldson, *The Public Domain: Its History, with Statistics* (Washington, D. C. 1884), was the first large-scale compendium of information about the first century of the American land system.

[9] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 88, 10.

nial South, rested on the "lax management of the public lands." Such a use of the term "public lands" was misleading, for the lands were subject to colonial charters and not to the will of the "public." Perhaps only in the colony of Pennsylvania was there a sense of land as a "public" resource, and even here the Penn family were the sole proprietors. Turner distinguished among the policies of several colonies, with special attention to the New England characteristics of compact settlement, community identity, and the preservation of lands for new settlements rather than sale of proprietors. He contrasted the land system of New England with its compact towns and shared values to the great landed estates created in New York and the opportunities for speculation by large planters in the colony of Virginia.[10]

One of Turner's continuing themes was the empowerment of a new population on the edge of settlement, and for him, this often took the form of the illegal occupation of lands. He used this "squatting" in the colonial period to support his view that families who lived on the frontier created a different society with different values, central to Turner's vision of the frontier as distinct in many ways from older settlements—and that they acted out the popular will by seizing what they felt belonged to them by right and occupancy. Everywhere, Turner juxtaposed these hard-working, adventurous, brave pioneer families against absentee landlords, the local sheriff, and the tax collector.[11]

Turner wrote often about the significance of the establishment of the land system under the Ordinance of 1785—but always in general terms. He thought of this land ordinance as a central feature of the organization of the new, independent American nation, and one of special significance because of its long life and its hold over the natural resources sought by millions of Americans over four generations. From the survey and the sale of the Seven Ranges in the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio in the late eighteenth century to the opening of the Sioux reservations in the "West Country" of the Dakotas early in the twentieth century, Turner thought of the land system as a vehicle for the distribution of the public domain through a million small transactions by individual purchasers.[12]

In the only complete book of his scholarly career, *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829,* Turner discussed (although not in great detail)

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[10] *Ibid.*, 55, 59, 95, 61-63, 74-75, 80, 91.
[11] *Ibid.*, 122-123.
[12] *Ibid.*, 132.

changes in the laws for the distribution of the public domain in the decade in the 1820s. He began by claiming that the low cost of public lands under the Ordinance of 1785 (and many later laws) made it possible "for even the most poor day laborer from the East to accumulate the capital necessary to make a land purchase" in the Ohio Valley. Thus, in the new American nation, the dream of land for the landless had become a reality. In 1819, however, Turner now found this universal availability jeopardized by an economic crisis. The Land Act of 1800 (sometimes known as the Harrison Law after its sponsor, William Henry Harrison, the non-voting delegate from the Northwest Territory) had established a system of selling public land on credit that encouraged purchasers to bid and buy beyond their immediate means. In the heady atmosphere of cheap land and thirty-cent cotton that followed the peace in 1815, ambitious frontier families of every rank bought more lands at higher prices than they could pay for, counting on rising land values and continuing high prices of staple crops to cover their debts. In 1819 both credit and prices collapsed, leaving families across the trans-Appalachian frontier with unpaid debts totaling $23,000,000 on public land alone.[13]

What followed was a political, economic, and administrative adjustment in the land system of staggering proportions. Something about the debt made observers at all levels very uneasy, and elected representatives hurried to resolve the crisis. Their instrument was the Land Act of 1820, by which the government agreed to write off millions of dollars owed on public lands. Turner observed that the end result was recognition that "the public domain was more than source of revenue to the general government; it was one of the most profoundly influential factors in the shaping of American social conditions." Indeed, it was. What Turner neglected to analyze was the reality that much of the debt of 1820 was owed by large planters in the South, especially in the new state of Alabama, where competitive bidding had driven prices to unheard of levels in the months immediately before the crash. Thus, the purchasers who benefited most from the generous arrangements under the Land Act of 1820 were not small farm families but large investors.[14]

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[13] Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (1906; rep., New York 1962), 75. The problems of administration under the Land Law of 1800, the surge of settlers to the West after 1815, and the onset of the Panic of 1819 are analyzed in Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business: The Settlement and Administration of American Public Lands, 1789-1837* (New York 1968), 23-25, 64-65, 89-96, 137-141.

[14] Turner, *Rise of the New West*, 109, 110.

Were these frontier debtors speculators? Perhaps so, but only in the sense that there were many speculators at varying levels. Turner used the term "speculator" in a pejorative sense, but tens of thousands of purchasers bought more land than they could farm in the years from 1815 to 1819, expecting to benefit from rising land values. In this expectation they shared a common approach to land that ran from the Virginia proprietors at the opening of the seventeenth century to the tract developers in California or Florida in the late twentieth century. As a final gesture to popular pressure, Congress passed additional relief laws for the rest of the decade of the 1820s, enabling the earlier purchasers to postpone returning lands they could not pay for almost indefinitely. The Land Act of 1820 turned out to be an administrative nightmare, a policy of confusion, and testimony to the political strength of public lands debtors in the Congress and in the executive branches of government. Whatever this piece of legislation (and its successors) said about frontier democracy, it also spoke of frontier greed.[15]

Turner turned to subsequent land legislation in his *The United States, 1830-1850*, a collection of essays assembled in book form by some of his students after his death. Here, he wrote in lyrical tones of the powerful expression of frontier (and even national) values involved in recognition of the rights of squatters and the deliberate decision of the federal government not to use force against them. Preemption laws—temporary acts beginning in 1830 and made permanent in 1841—that affirmed the rights of first settlers to their improvements at the minimum price without risk of competitors in a public auction he saw as a frontier triumph.[16]

Turner dealt quickly and casually with other significant land legislation, perhaps because these laws fell outside the dates of his study. He ignored the Graduation Act of 1854 that reduced the price of public land in proportion to the time it had been subject to entry. The Homestead Act, signed one year after Turner's birth, represented the culmination of long and continuous pressure to offer public lands to the citizens of the republic on even more generous terms than the Jacksonian standard of $1.25 per acre. From the inauguration of George Washington to the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, a thousand laws enacted with respect to the public lands documented both

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[15] Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business*, 109-127, 141-156.

[16] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The United States, 1830-1850* (1935; rep., Gloucester, Mass. 1958), 289-292.

the centrality of land to the interests of citizens and the responsiveness of elected officials to popular pressure. Turner quoted with approval Henry Clay's observation, "No subject, which has presented itself to the present, or perhaps any preceding, Congress, is of greater magnitude than that of the public lands." Turner called the issue of the public domain one of the main subjects of national legislation "influenced by the frontier." Under this heading of influence, he would have catalogued preemption, graduation, and homestead, without an analysis of any of them.[17]

Turner saw the frontier as moving forward in wave-like fashion, and the continuous occupation of land was central to this view, from colonial Virginia to California and Oregon on the West Coast. But his attention to the frontier of the continental nation was uneven. He found the movement of New England farmers to the rich and available lands of the Middle West appropriate to his vision of this new world. His attention to the advance of frontier families into the South with slave labor an integral part of the frontier process, proved minimal when compared to his focus on the world of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. His treatment of the frontier west of the great bend of the Missouri River, especially in the Rocky Mountains and the intermontane plateaus, was equally sparse, confined to some observations about mining camps, fur traders, and the march of American migration in review at South Pass.[18]

Turner had nothing to say about two important aspects of the public domain at the close of the nineteenth century: the significance of water resources and the conservation movement. He did not express the growing concern of many that a quarter section west of the line of semi-aridity did not make sense as an economic unit of agricultural enterprise. And he does not seem to have paid much attention to Major John W. Powell's *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States* or to Captain Hiram Chittenden's report on irrigation in the West. Turner continued to look at the well-watered prairies and forests of the Middle West for his sense of the public domain.[19]

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[17] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 26, 25. A comprehensive treatment of pre-emption, graduation, and homestead is Paul Wallace Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington 1968), 222-240, 186-188, 393-399.

[18] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 8, 12, 23.

[19] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 419-420.

Figure 3. Turner Outdoors

Source: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Throughout his scattered writings on the impact of public lands the importance of land availability on American character, "development," and democracy, Turner saw a direct line of cause and effect that ran between frontier farm families and the government in Washington. As these western people grew in numbers and influence, they demanded ever greater concession in the form of easier conditions under which the western lands might be acquired. The responses of Congress from 1800 (Harrison Law) to 1862 (Homestead Act) confirmed this connection. Yet Turner constantly ignored the administrative apparatus of the General Land Office, a branch of the Treasury Department, that grew enormously after 1815. The decisions of this agency often reinterpreted congressional legislation, and these administrative judgments (sometimes bitterly disputed by members of Congress) did much to define the operation of the land system. The office processed hundreds of thousands of individual transactions and produced at the end of this process a flood of land patents conveying title in fee simple, a final critical step in the land system. The intense interest displayed by members of Congress and the executive in the operations of the land office and the sometimes caustic criticisms of its circulars interpreting congressional laws stand as testimony to its influence.[20]

Another of Turner's most consistent themes was the connection between the availability of lands and economic and political democracy. He wrote, "The public land policy was developed by laws which subordinated the revenue to the idea of the upbuilding of a democracy of small landholders. The squatters of the Ohio Valley forced the passage of preemption laws and these laws in their turn led to the homestead agitation. There has been no single element more influential in shaping American democracy and its ideals than this land policy." The term "democracy" in Turner's writing had both economic and political meanings; yet, recent studies have commented on the rapid appearance of inequality amidst this abundance of available land. Despite the presumed intentions of the system, some families emerged with large tracts while others remained landless.[21]

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[20] The growing authority of the General Land Office in interpreting legislation is discussed in Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business*, 178-179, 295-296.

[21] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 170, 192. For example, Lee Soltow, "Inequality Amidst Abundance: Land Ownership in Early Nineteenth Ohio," *Ohio History*, 88 (Spring 1979), 146-147, concludes that "land ownership was widespread and substantial" but "total land was inequitably distributed from the first stages of settlement."

Turner published his celebrated essay to mark the close of the frontier. Yet for tens of thousands of families, the search for free land continued in isolated but striking episodes. It is instructive to think that during Turner's adult lifetime, he might have witnessed the final great rushes for a part of the American dream. As a graduate student, he might have left Johns Hopkins for a week to observe the first great Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889, and he might have departed Chicago in 1893, after reading his essay on the frontier, to chronicle the second. It did not seem to have occurred to him to do so. Later, as an established scholar at the University of Wisconsin, he might have taken the train from Madison to Yankton, South Dakota, where he could have talked to men and women lined up to register for the lottery that awarded quarter sections of the Rosebud (Sioux) Reservation. Here the great historian of the American frontier would have encountered what one eyewitness saw: "school teachers, clerks, lawyers, farmers, physicians, factory workers, mechanics, business men and nearly every manner of citizen," all "anxious to take a chance for reservation land. Many women were among them." Like Turner, these men and women felt that the frontier was coming to a close. They seized the opportunity to participate in the three-hundred-year adventure of taking up land in the West. It would have been a wonderful opportunity for a man who proclaimed the significance of the public domain in the nation's history in sweeping terms to question those citizens standing in long lines who affirmed his view by their presence.[22]

Fifteen years later Turner could have witnessed the failure of this last American frontier. Harsh climate and burdensome debt drove hard-working farm families off the South Dakota land. This last generation of people to take the land came to think of themselves as the first generation to fail at building the American dream of an independent farm. It was an awkward close to a century of available land. Thousands had entered a lottery for the few available sites, the lucky winners had begun their labors with a sense of independence and euphoria that diminished with harsh winters, prairie isolation, and in the end, a growing sense of failure. At the same time that Turner wrote in his study at the University of Wisconsin of the triumphs of the frontier made possible in part by the availability of free land,

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[22] John A. Dixon, "Taking Chances on Indian Lands," quoted in Paula M. Nelson, *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917* (Iowa City, Iowa 1986), 19.

newspapers editors in South Dakota struggled to explain the failure of upright and hard-working families. It would have been a poignant touch for the editor of the Midland *Mail* or the Kadoda *Press* to invite the learned historian to contribute a guest column on the future of the West River Country of South Dakota. How would Turner have written of the failed agricultural frontier of western South Dakota at the opening of the twentieth century? Perhaps he would have concluded that a pioneer people now needed more than available land to succeed.[23]

The business of distributing the public domain to the citizens of the republic was more complicated than Turner ever imagined. The flood of individual transactions (settlers could buy tracts of as small as 80 acres in 1832), the multiplicity of laws, the illegalities and fraud everywhere threatened at times to overwhelm the system. Original images of the nation as an intimate community (in spite of the innumerable differences across time and much space) governed by a spare and friendly group of ordinary people persisted long after the land office business grew large. In 1800, it was just possible to think of the appropriateness of requiring the president of the United States to sign every land patent. This act was an ultimate symbol: a portion of the public domain was to be conveyed in absolute title by the president himself to individual citizens of the republic. The intimacy was at once classical and democratic, a portion of the nation itself passed from its first citizen to every citizen. In practice, by the year 1830, the flood of purchasers and the bureaucracy of the land system combined to turn out 30,000 land patents a year; but even in the face of this avalanche of land deeds, lawmakers proved reluctant to change the old pattern. Finally, Congress agreed that a private secretary might sign the president's name, continuing by more efficient means the symbolic final act under which the land changed hands.[24]

Although alienation of the public domain came in many forms over more than a century, Turner's vision remained the individual family farm. He wrote little about the great land grants by the federal government for varied purposes. He noted the demands of states for donations of lands to build canals in the 1820s and 1830s, but he gave them scant attention by comparison to the distribution of lands to individual families. Congress made grants big and small, to individuals and groups, to speed settlement and to enrich the nation; but these

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[23] Nelson discusses coming to terms with failure, *ibid.*, chs. 9 and 10.

[24] Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business*, 77, 257, 262.

issues were not central to Turner's vision of the West. He saw the advance of the frontier as the work of individuals or individual families, in great numbers to be sure, but each acting individually.[25]

What did Turner think of the huge grants of lands to railroads west of the Mississippi tendered to speed construction across the inhospitable distances of the plains and the hostile landscape of the Rocky Mountains and the intermontane plateaus? He never quite said. While Turner was an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, the Northern Pacific Railroad received from the federal government a land grant that totaled more than 60,000,000 acres, approximately ten percent of the landed area of the entire American nation. The Northern Pacific established its own land office to make decisions about the distribution of its lands. Indeed, the railroad created a separate land system, parallel to the federal government's and dealing with a landed area considerably larger than New England. Yet none of this captured Turner's attention.[26]

Among the other issues that Turner passed over was the question of Native Americans and their rights to the land. These groups were, after all, the original occupants. Turner's views of Native Americans in their relationship to the land were consistent with those of his age: he considered theirs an inferior civilization being replaced by a superior one. He constantly spoke of "discovery" and wrote that the lands were "empty" when the Euro-American settlers appeared on the scene to occupy them. Nor did he bother to comment on the treaty process by which the federal government acquired lands from the Native Americans. This act of acquisition was, after all, the first step in the process described in the Land Ordinance of 1785.[27]

Finally, for all his strong statements about the influence of the public domain in American history, Turner never pursued the issue in detail. His essays expressed strong views, but he never analyzed his ideas about the public lands in depth. His students wrote of him on the occasion of the posthumous publication of *The United States, 1830-1850*, "Professor Turner did not relish the making of books. His eager mind was bent on exploration. New approaches fascinated him, and new materials lured him from routine efforts. He disliked to find his researches halted and his ideas crystallized by publication."[28] So it

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[25] Turner, *Rise of the New West*, 202

[26] Robin W. Winks, *Frederick Billings: A Life* (New York 1991), 186-187.

[27] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 13-16, 44-46, and numerous other examples.

[28] Turner, *The United States, 1830-1850*, v.

was with the issue of the public lands. His inquiries were preliminary, almost fragmentary, broad brush summaries with sweeping generalizations that fitted his overall themes of frontier and section.

Two years after Turner's death in 1932, Paul Wallace Gates published his first book, a study of the Illinois Central Railroad's colonization efforts. Its appearance signaled a new level of interest and analysis in the examination of the public domain.[29] Gates would go on to analyze the varying influences of the public lands on our national life over two centuries and across most of the continent, doing work over fifty years that Turner never eagerly pursued. Were he alive, Turner surely would have read Gates and approved, but his attention would have been only brief, for he would already be thinking about something new.

The Dark and Bloody but Endlessly Inventive Middle Ground of Indian Frontier Historiography

Mary E. Young

Frederick Jackson Turner, a native of Portage, Wisconsin, wrote his Johns Hopkins dissertation on a subject close to home: "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin."[1] His adviser, Herbert Baxter Adams, a Eurocentric white male if there ever was one, doubted the importance of so lowly a topic, so Turner naturally freighted his subject with all the significance it could carry, especially evolutionary significance. As a general rule, Turner explained, a trading post "[e]stablished in the midst of an undeveloped society by

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[29] Paul Wallace Gates, *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work* (Cambridge, Mass. 1934).

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[1] Turner published his dissertation in *The Johns Hopkins Studies in History and Political Science,* ninth series, numbers 11-12 (1891). Fulmer Mood, *Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner* (Madison, Wisc. 1938) reprints, with a useful introduction, both the dissertation and Turner's essay on the significance of the frontier.

a more advanced people" became the center not only of new economic influences, but also of "all the transforming forces that accompany the intercourse of a higher with a lower civilization."[2] The routes of Roman trade were to a considerable extent the routes of the barbarian migrations. Not all trading frontiers were identical; the gulf between Roman and barbarian (or Phoenician and Greek) was smaller than that between European and Indian, partly on account of "race differences." Still, Turner argued, both the "destructive" and the "elevating influences" of such trade should be worthy of historical exploration.[3]

So far as Indian society was concerned, destructive influences predominate in Turner's analysis. Tribesmen welcomed the trader, whom they saw as a "quasi-supernatural" bringer of useful and attractive novelties, but they rapidly became dependent on the trade because of the overwhelming military advantage conferred by firearms. "The stage of civilization that could make a gun and gun-powder was too far above the bow and arrow stage to be reached by the Indians."[4] No longer a subsistence hunter, the Indian became "a hunter for furs with which to procure the goods of civilization." This "tended to perpetuate the hunter stage," while simultaneously (Turner nonetheless notes) developing a mercantile class of intermediary traders among the native people.[5] Such commerce was not wholly alien to the Indians; in fact preexisting intertribal trade, "commerce in the popular sense of the term," had formed the original basis on which trade between Indians and Europeans developed. Europeans even adopted the Indians' "fictive" definition of trade as "an exchange of presents." Intermarriage gave French traders an advantage, but Turner noticed as a result, "the purity of the stock was destroyed and a mixed race produced."[6] Appointing chiefs without regard to native social organization, the traders broke down the old totemic divisions and left the tribe "without a recognized head." As the "extinction" of game made lands less valuable, tribesmen exchanged lands for annuities. Traders collected annuities rather than furs in payment of debts, which led to a decline in the Indian's "business honesty" and an increase in his consumption of whiskey.[7] The

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[2] *Ibid.*, 82.
[3] *Ibid.*, 90.
[4] *Ibid.*, 167.
[5] *Ibid.*, 166.
[6] *Ibid.*, 167.
[7] *Ibid.*

careful reader is at a loss to discover any "elevating" influences in this process of disintegration.

On the Euro-American side, however, elevating influences proliferated, and these influences constitute the major focus of Turner's analysis. Together with the leading philanthropic imperialists of his generation, Turner found the Indian past significant principally as a path (rather literally) to the Anglo-American future. Since Indians supplied food to the early settlements, they assisted both the English and the French in gaining a foothold in America. The trade invited European exploration and the opening up of interior water systems. Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to find opportunities for private traders displaced by the government's factory systems and John Jacob Astor established a brief "foothold" for American claims to Oregon with his post at Astoria. Pathfinder John C. Frémont and the earliest emigrants to California followed trader publicists and guides. Trading posts provided strategic points of rivalry in the conflicts for empire between France and Britain. In either case, fur traders briefly retarded the "agricultural stage" for both Indians and prospective settlers; but in the end the trader became the "farmer's pathfinder."[8] Trading posts were pioneers of settlement, Turner grandly concluded; the Wisconsin lead trade and every major city in the state owed its origin to traders' activities, while Indian trails established the routes of future highways.

Two years after the publication of his dissertation, Turner published his better-known essay on the "Significance of the Frontier." Always a thrifty historian, he recycled many of the themes of his dissertation, but in the essay the evolutionary theme prevailed more insistently. Standing at the Cumberland Gap, and a century later at South Pass, the historian witnessed the inevitable procession: buffalo, Indian, fur trader and hunter, cattle-raiser, pioneer farmer. The Indian trade, Turner argued, had paved the way for civilization not just in Milwaukee and Green Bay, but also in Albany, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, and Kansas City. The Indian frontier served national history as a consolidating agent, fostering intercolonial cooperation and united national action, and providing a military training school for a nascent empire.

Authors of the 1990s, drawing on the work of a generation of ethnohistorians, informed by the disciplines of demography, archaeology, ecology, anthropology, and the "new" social history, and by

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[8] *Ibid.*, 174.

the intellectual exchanges facilitated at the D'Arcy McNickle Center for Indian History at the Newberry Library, tend to reverse Turner's priorities. Their political agenda is less imperial than multicultural. They privilege the native experience, explore the complexities of intercultural exchange, often emphasize the egalitarian character of relations on the "middle ground" between ethnocultural groups of the colonial period, and tend to treat the gradual disappearance of this middle ground as decline rather than progress. But these critical new historians share Turner's commitment to the significance of the Indian frontier.

Richard White in *The Middle Ground* begins, like Turner, with the gathering of peoples in the region between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, centered at Green Bay.[9] Disease and depopulation, as well as Iroquois guns, bore responsibility for the peoples' movements, and microclimates favorable to corn-growing and fishing dictated population centers. French missions and forts followed the refugees into the region. White traces the social and ceremonial innovations these tribes employed to create a framework for peace, alliance, and exchange: intermarriage, adoption, gifts exchanges, the midewiwin society, the calumet ceremony, and the Eagle Dance. Like Turner, White concludes that the French drew the Great Lakes tribes into the fur trade as a way of winning victories over the Iroquois and Sioux; he also hypothesizes that some natives converted Christ into a Manitou. By the 1680s, the tribesmen and women had learned that the French were more greedy than omnipotent, and surely not Manitous. Like Turner, White attributes French influence during the period of alliance with the Algonquians to their services as mediators and peacemakers. Peace with the Iroquois permitted a diaspora from refugee centers to still more fertile and temperate lands.

Their need to find ways to secure foreigners' cooperation without the use of force drove the French and the native peoples to craft a cultural Middle Ground, justifying their own actions according to their partner's cultural premises (which they sometimes misperceived). Christian Indian women, attracted by the powerful figure of Mary, responded to Jesuits' strictures against polygamy by marrying Frenchmen who profited from both the women's services and their powerful social connections. Through a series of pragmatic fictions, the French came to accept a version of the Algonquian way of dealing

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[9] White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York 1991).

with murder. Between French greed and native robbery and murder, the Middle Ground could be dark and bloody, but it held. European goods enabled Algonquian gift-givers to transform enemies into friends, and in time both ceremonial life and diplomacy came to require such imported materials. The French tried, but failed to tie payments to services rendered. Guns apart, perhaps, the natives were not materially dependent on French goods, though they appealed to the French, as to their Manitous, in terms of need truly piteous. "Medal" chiefs, chosen by the people and simply recognized by the French, strengthened their positions as Indian leaders by serving as conduits for European presents.

In "republican" Ohio, last settled of the intertribal village clusters, rebels against the French rebelled as well against their own village hierarchies and created a new political order in Logstown and Pickawillany. By 1753, Ohio's Indian republicans, including the Iroquois, regarded both British and French as a single, Christian threat. Neolin's separatist prophecies became part of a larger movement of religious syncretism as the tribes struck at the stingy British successors of the French pères. Unsuccessful at leading rebellion, Neolin proved eager to use Christian doctrine to supplement his original vision. His teaching reflected a shift from ritual concern to moral concern in native religious thinking.[10]

Following their defeat, rebel Algonquians allied with the English, but their new Middle Ground centered on diplomacy, not daily life, for British settlers hated, feared, and despised the Indians and did not marry or live among them. British parsimony deprived chiefs of the means of controlling discontented warriors, and the rising liquor trade undermined village peace. The British middle ground proved firmest on the Ohio River and eastern shores of Lake Erie, where traders and captives preserved earlier French traditions of intermarriage. Elsewhere the peace was unstable.

With 50,000 whites of heterogeneous ethnicity living west of the Appalachians by 1774, unruly young men on both sides drank, stole horses, and fought one another. On neither side could authorities control delinquents. The similarities between the mixed agricultural, grazing, and hunting economies of Indians and Europeans produced

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[10] A recent study of the reconstitution of Shawnee and Delaware communities in Ohio is Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln, Neb. 1992). Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore 1992) traces relationships between religious syncretism and militant rebellion.

competition for resources, and competition fed hostilities. The French had been friends and relatives; the English were enemies and thieves. Frontier Indian haters in the 1770s and 1780s wiped out many Indian friends of the whites. As the British lost control of their Anglo-American settlements, the post-revolutionary struggle between confederated tribes and newly liberated Americans over control of the Ohio country completed the process of defining the Indians as "Other." Indian conciliators such as Hendrick Aupaumut lost their own struggle to promote the Americans as "Washingtons," rather than "Big Knives." Miami leaders recreated the image of the British as fathers who would assist in the fight against the American Other.

Nativist leaders Tenskwatawa (the Prophet) and Tecumseh responded to the peculiar American combination of imperial benevolence (Jefferson's "civilization" programs) and back-country Indian-hating with a separatism both militant and syncretic. "Paradoxical nativists," they were comprehensible only on the middle ground.[11] Rejecting the traditional work of women as cultural intermediaries, Tecumseh and the Prophet sought, American-style, to subordinate the sex. They found their most enthusiastic supporters among western tribes who had not yet witnessed the power and numbers of the encroaching Americans. Their intertribal villages and the league of villages that was their confederation represented a culmination of the politics of the Middle Ground; with Tecumseh's death in 1813, White concludes, the attempt to reconstitute the middle ground finally failed: "Once there had been a complicated world that could be both dreamscape and landscape, that contained both masters of the game and fur traders, prophets and missionaries, villages like Detroit and villages like Tippecanoe. This world, pulled forward by Europeans and Indians in tandem, vanished from most of what had been the *pays dén haut*. The middle ground itself withered and died. The Americans arrived and dictated."[12]

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[11] White, *Middle Ground,* 502.

[12] *Ibid.*, 523. For analyses of creative adaptation, mutual accommodation, and ultimate estrangement between Indians and pioneers to the east and west of White's Middle Ground, see Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The People of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill 1992); and Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln 1984). Richard White has been an able spokesman for the position that the enclavement of Indian communities, the exploitation of Indian resources, the encouragement of dependency, and the social, cultural, and political development of tribal life *do not* end with the frontier. See White, *The Roots of*

Daniel Usner pursues similar themes in a different regional setting and a social milieu complicated by the presence of involuntary immigrants from Africa.[13] Usner finds the French at Mobile in 1702 making temporary peace between Choctaws and Chickasaws, exploiting other tribal rivalries to obtain Indian slaves, and establishing sociable ties with native communities through feasts, calumet-smoking, and gift-giving. Fearing the potential for Indian/African-American alliances, the French ceased enslaving tribespeople for local use; when in 1729 they crushed a revolt against the Natchez, they shipped captives to the Indies in exchange for imported Africans.

Unable to supply goods to both Choctaws and Chickasaws, the French instead maintained a balance of power by fostering intertribal warfare. Colonial ties led the Choctaws to establish more centralized and stratified government, while Franco-British trade competition fostered tribal factions. Closer to French settlement, the *petites nations* created by depopulation and tribal fragmentation supplied French customers with venison, corn, herbs, baskets, hens, and horses. Fur trading posts in the interior became centers of food exchange among French, Indians, and African Americans who pioneered the creole cuisine.

The small size of the French colonial population made it necessary to admit African Americans to careers of talent, such as craftsmen, traders, soldiers, herders, hunters, petty cultivators, and boatmen. In 1740, fifty free blacks in New Orleans formed their own militia company. During the French period, the marginality of Louisiana to the Atlantic economy and the sparse colonial population retarded the development of commercial agriculture on slave plantations.

Louisiana became Spanish in 1762, and West Florida, after a season under British control, followed suit in 1783. Both the British and the Spanish proved more energetic colonizers than the French, and plantation agriculture and the commercialized deerskin trade ex-

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Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaw, Pawnees, and Navajos (Lincoln 1983) and *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (Norman 1991). Compare Terry P. Wilson, *The Underground Reservation: Osage Oil* (Lincoln 1985); Stephen E. Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York 1988); Daniel L. Boxberger, *To Fish in Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing* (Lincoln 1989); and Marjane Ambler, *Breaking the Iron Bonds: Indian Control of Energy Development* (Lawrence, Kan. 1990).

[13] Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill 1992).

panded accordingly. Restriction of slave assemblies, concubinage, marketing, and freedom of movement followed suit. With the gradual disappearance of middle-ground society, slaves' former means of subsistence—access to isolated terrain, firearms, theft, and petty trading—became forms of resistance and rebellion. As both white and black populations escalated, the middle ground turned underground. Well supplied with rum by resident traders, but less well supplied with presents, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks resorted to social banditry.

After 1783, plantation agriculture, racial stratification, and monopolization of the fur trade by Americans undermined the "flexibility and fluidity" of "older systems of livelihood." Still, "economic customs and intercultural relations fostered over the previous century would endure for many Indians, settlers, and slaves as vital strategies of resistance for a long time to come."[14] In the large interior Indian nations, among the Choctaws and Chickasaws, the flood of resident traders after 1762 and their marriages to tribal women accelerated the tribes' efforts to adopt the crops, animals, agricultural and commercial techniques of their neighbors. By 1800 the sons and grandsons of French and English traders had established themselves as tribal leaders.

In another part of the South, the Cherokee Piedmont and Appalachia, Marvin Thomas Hatley has discovered that even the English proved briefly amenable to trade and diplomacy characterized by mutual dependency and accommodation. As frontier storekeepers paved the way for agricultural settlement and aspired to become patriarchal planters, they found psychosocial dependency on the Cherokees increasingly distasteful. Cherokee egalitarianism threatened hierarchical relations both within the family and between masters and slaves. Cherokee militancy and land retention thwarted white men's expansionist ambitions. Hatley focuses on processes of estrangement, exacerbated by the Cherokee War of 1759-1761, the bitter frontier warfare of the revolutionary period, and the continued guerilla engagements with the Chicamaugas, which led both north British migrants and Cherokees to separatist visions of their cultures and destinies. Still, until this final removal in the 1830s, many Cherokees tried to craft frameworks for continued, if controlled mutual ex-

[14] *Ibid.*, 148.

change. Their famous métis-led pursuit of "civilization" was the latest of many efforts to cultivate a middle ground.[15]

Joel Martin identifies the Sequoyan syllabary as a distinctive product of the middle ground among the Cherokees. The principal focus of his work, however, is the violent demise of that ground in the 1813-1814 Muskogee civil war. It was a creative destruction, in which nativist Muskogee forged a rebirth of their religious and social identities at enormous cost both to themselves and to their intrusive white neighbors.[16]

While similar intercultural trade, diplomacy, and intermarriage occurred on the Spanish colonial frontier of the Southwest, religious identity and organization played a larger role than on frontiers to the east and north. In *When Jesus Came, The Corn Mothers Went Away*, Ramón A. Gutiérrez begins with the stories—the creation narrative of the Pueblo peoples.[17] The stories express the Pueblos' equation of sexuality, fertility, and regeneration with the holy. January and September ceremonials celebrating female fecundity featured sexual intercourse believed to foster cosmic harmony. When warriors brought scalps in from the wild, women sat on the scalps; thus domesticated, the scalps became potent rainmakers. When celibate Spanish Franciscans arrived in 1598, they did not respond favorably to Pueblo women's efforts to domesticate them through intercourse, or to the ceremonial fellatio male rain-makers employed. Nor did Juan de Oñate, leader of their expedition, rely upon persuasion. After reenacting the conquest of the Aztecs, he informed the chiefs of thirty-one Pueblos that they must obey the priests or their cities would be destroyed. Reciprocal gift-giving lay at the heart of Pueblo theology and social practice, but what they gave as gifts the Spanish received as tribute

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[15] Marvin Thomas Hatley, "The Dividing Paths: The Encounters of the Cherokees and the South Carolinians in the Southern Mountains, 1670-1785" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University 1989). The published version of this dissertation (New York 1993) was not available at the time of this writing. Peter H. Wood, Gregory Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln 1989) contains very useful essays by Hatley and others pursuing similar themes. A pioneering and influential study of creative adaptation and accommodation in the colonial Southeast is James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill 1989).

[16] Joel W. Martin, "The Destruction of the Middle Ground and the Rise of Domination," paper delivered to The U.S. Capitol Historical Society Conference (March 1992); Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston 1991).

[17] Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford 1991)

surrendered. Soldiers stole and attacked women. When Acoma warriors responded violently, the Spanish slaughtered eight hundred and condemned the remaining adults to slavery, severing the feet of men over twenty-five years of age.

The Spanish could practice deception and accommodation as well as cruelty. They took pains to arrive in the rainy season, and friars represented themselves as supermen who controlled the forces of nature.[18] Pueblo people, in turn, understood Spanish practices according to their own cultural norms. They viewed Spanish governors and soldiers as "Outside Chiefs" comparable to their own officials for external affairs, and the friars as "Inside Chiefs," comparable to their theocracy in controlling the sacred, conjuring rain, healing the sick, and (through domestic animals) providing meat. As the religious equipment of the Kivas enabled the Pueblos to recreate the time of their emergence from earth and call the Katsina spirits from the mountains, the reredos behind the altars of the Spanish churches brought saints to witness Christ's sacrifice. To obtain the friars' ritual blessing, the Pueblos gave them food, labor, and respect, as they did to their own chiefs.

The Pueblos' precontact wars had familiarized them with conquest and the imposition of alien deities. When circumstances permitted, however, medicine men killed and scalped friars and invited women to domesticate the scalps. Padres in turn profaned the Kivas and erected crosses over them. The Spanish deliberately disrupted hunting and gift exchanges between Pueblo elders and younger persons and changed the sexual division of labor by inducing men to build and women to weave. They imposed patriarchal authority over both land and children which women had controlled, and suppressed women's fertility societies. For the cyclic ritual calendar they substituted daily routines of work and prayer. They exploited similarities between prayer sticks and the cross, between Pueblo ritual self-flagellation and their own. This was "an evangelization strategy of eradicating native rites and substituting Christian ones that mimicked indigenous gestures and paraphernalia, no matter how divergent their respective meanings." This strategy worked so well, on the surface, that it "led the friars to misinterpret the apparent piety with which the Indians worshipped God."[19]

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[18] Compare the accommodationist tactics of French Jesuits described in James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York 1985), 23-127.

[19] Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 100.

During the seventeenth century, the Spanish provoked Apache raids and failed to cure smallpox or prevent drought. The Pueblos resorted to ancient rites and begged the corn mothers to return. Medicine men stigmatized friars as witches, and 49 of 100 Franciscans who served New Mexico in the seventeenth century achieved the martyrdom many of them coveted. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 drove the Spanish to El Paso; natives shattered bells, icons, and crosses and burned the Spaniards' seeds.

After the reconquest of the 1690s, the Franciscans returned, but Pueblo "Outside Chiefs" with Spanish titles, chosen by their own theocracy, took over the role of intermediaries between themselves and the Spanish. The *repartimiento*, or compulsory labor draft, drew men and women periodically from the villages. Though women servants often had pregnancy forced upon them, Indian villagers shunned them, and their children joined Spanish communities or the *genízaro* towns of detribalized Navajos and Utes who had been captured and enslaved in "just wars" with the Spanish. Genetic mixture drew new boundaries but produced nothing like the French middle ground. Having forged their nation in centuries of holy war against the Moors, the Spanish were not eager to make kinsmen of the "other." For the Spanish, "purity of blood" constituted a claim to honor. Regardless of actual ancestry, everyone who could get away with it claimed "limpieza de sangre." Men who did not hesitate to rape servants put a premium on virginity and marital fidelity among their "own" women. Formal as well as informal intermarriage persisted as a practice, far more prevalent among those of mixed ancestry than among Pueblo or Spanish spouses, but as elsewhere in Spanish America "precise" measures of genetic admixture provided almost obsessive markers of social rank.

Regardless of the Pueblos' intense concern for boundaries, Spanish became the *lingua franca* of native communication, and iron tools, cattle, pigs, chickens, and horses became fixtures in the villages, along with a patrilineal kinship system and male control of land and households.[20] To avoid contention and divisions, they made ritual roles and town leadership hereditary. The patrilineal Jesus replaced the matrilineal corn mother. Spanish campaigns against idolatry drove religious rites underground, though even above-ground saints were always depicted in the company of powerful animals.

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[20] The Zuni, Hopi, Laguna, and Acoma retained the matrilineage.

Though Pueblo villages maintained an active trade with Spanish settlements and Pueblo soldiers fought under Spanish command, Bourbon reformers of the latter eighteenth century reduced direct Spanish control of Pueblo communities. They abolished the *repartrimiento* and deprived the Franciscans of Indian service. By 1792 there were only 16 Franciscan missionaries in New Mexico. The successful Bourbon effort to encourage immigration, agricultural improvements, and mercantile acvitity upset the ecological balance between population and arable land, increasing both concentration of landholding and debt peonage among the Spanish and mestizo populations. Market penetration, powered by United States entrepreneurs during the Mexican period, transformed the economy and society of Euro-Americans, but the Pueblos more successfully maintained their painfully constructed boundaries.[21]

In contrast to Frederick Jackson Turner, recent ethnohistorians have found on the Indian frontier not so much a point of collision between savagery and civilization as a complex encounter among peoples of significantly various ethnic background. On the resulting middle ground, cultural and political conflicts coexisted with mutual efforts to discover and exploit the often intricate parallelisms in political organization, social control, material culture, and religious belief and practice between native and newcomer societies.[22] This rich new literature renders naive Turner's breezy speculations about the nature of cultural exchange on the true impact of each culture on the other. And yet, to be fair one must add that today's ethnohistorians, when pressed to justify the significance of their subject in the canon of American history, resort to claims for the impact of Indians on Euro-American civilization at least as far-reaching as those of Turner. Although they give their findings a distinctly negative charge, new ethnohistorians have found (as Turner first insisted) that the frontier was

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[21] For an examination of cultural change as a function of the "incorporation" of the southwestern area into the metropolitan economy, based on a sociological analysis of the secondary literature, see Thomas D. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350-1880* (Lawrence 1989). Adaptations in a more lethal Spanish and Anglo-American frontier in California are analyzed in Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, Conn. 1988). Hurtado emphasizes the immense obstacles intruders placed on family formation among native peoples.

[22] See Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Indians in American History: An Introduction* (Arlington Heights, Ill. 1988), especially the essay of James Axtell, "Colonial America Without the Indians: A Counterfactual Scenario," 47-66.

a proving ground for American national character—capitalist imperialism, racism, sexism, anthropomorphism, and all.[23]

Turner, The Frontier, and the Study of Religion in America

John B. Boles

Frederick Jackson Turner had little to say about religion, on the frontier or elsewhere. Personally he was antagonistic toward organized re-

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[23] See for examples William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review,* 24 (Nov. 1955), 395; Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Cleveland 1961); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier* (Middletown, Conn. 1973); Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York 1985); Michael P. Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York 1975); Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York 1979); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis 1980); Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown 1982); Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln 1990); David Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York 1992); Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston 1986); Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston 1986); and Calvin Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (New York 1987). The works of White, Martin and Hatley sometimes echo this line of analysis. See Hatley, "Cherokee Women Farmers Hold Their Ground," in Robert D. Mitchell, ed., *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era* (Lexington, Ky. 1991). For the countercultural and "politically correct" employment of Indian imagery, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York 1978); and some of the more parodic fantasies in James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1990).

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ligion and had no interest in theology.[1] Perhaps he found it difficult to understand that either could have been of much import to others. In his famous essay whose centennial we here celebrate, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," religion is definitely of secondary importance to people on the frontier. He says only that the settled East, worried about the perceived social fluidity of the West, saw the region as a fertile mission field, and that in the comparative institutional void of the West religious sects flourished.[2] Turner associated churches with the very kinds of organized movements and agencies imported from the Old World and established in the East that most deteriorated and melted away on the frontier. Historic churches became competing sects. Theology was replaced with emotion. The matrix of the frontier, in his vague language, favored individualism and practical action, values he did not find characteristic of organized religion. While the frontier affected religion, religion had little affect on the frontier.

Turner's importance, of course, lies more in how his interpretation influenced the work of other scholars than in his own publications; and the frontier became for almost four decades the dominant interpretative motif in the history of American Christianity. The first full-scale application of Turnerian ideas to religion in the United States appeared in a book written by a professor of church history at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Peter G. Mode. In his 1923 book, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity*, Mode declared "that the Americanizing of Christianity has been the process by which it has been frontierized."[3] He then went on to ascribe to the influence of the frontier what he considered the defining characteristics of American religion: the missionary urge, the dominance of revivalism, the proliferation of denominational colleges and competing sects, evangelical cooperation at one moment and rivalry the next, centralized church government, the relative weakness of sacerdotalism and the emphasis on the individual conversion experience. For Mode the frontier's influence was passive; religious ideas, institutions, and practices changed themselves to fit the practical needs of the people of the West. The result—active missionary movements,

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[1] Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York 1973), 51, 57, 424-425.

[2] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C. 1894), 225-226.

[3] Peter G. Mode, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* (New York 1923), 14.

revivals, a deemphasis of theology, and a demand for practical results—was a form of Christianity that effectively met the challenge of the new environment.

The historian who most popularized the interpretation that the frontier was the critical locale for the development of American religion was William Warren Sweet, who also taught for decades at the University of Chicago, although Mode left before Sweet joined the faculty.[4] Sweet edited a number of volumes of documents, and he wrote a series of books on Methodism, on revivalism in American history, and a widely used textbook, *The Story of Religion in America*, which went through a number of editions. For Sweet the quintessential American locale was the frontier—never adequately defined, however—and it was that environment that he believed should most concern the historian interested in American religion. In good Turnerian language Sweet wrote in his textbook that the "greatest accomplishment of America" was the conquering of the continent; throughout this two-century process "the churches were in continuous contact with frontier conditions and needs, and no single fact is more significant in its influence upon American religion."[5] Like Mode, Sweet emphasized how religion adapted to the frontier situation, producing a peculiar American form of Christianity; unlike Mode, however, Sweet went on to suggest how religion in turn influenced the frontier.

Turner's frontier determinism gave immense transformative powers to a rather vague concept, the frontier. In Turner's writings the frontier changed the institutions that were brought to it from the East and gave rise to vigorous new adaptations. Turner focused, however, less on what was brought to the frontier than on the way the frontier broke down old ways and produced new institutions, practices, and ideas. This basic Turnerian idea Sweet implicitly rejected.[6] He eagerly accepted the argument that the frontier was the region of the most interesting and important developments in the evolution of American religion, but for Sweet the emphasis lay on how religious leaders creatively adapted their approach (institutions, policies, theology) to fit the particular social environment of the frontier. True, the

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[4] For a good analysis of Sweet's career, see James L. Ash, Jr., *Protestantism and the American University: An Intellectual Biography of William Warren Sweet* (Dallas 1982).

[5] William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (1930; rev. ed., New York 1950), 3.

[6] Ash, *Protestantism and the American University*, 44-48, has an able discussion of the influence of Turner on Sweet.

religions that best learned how to cope with the special needs of the frontier came to dominate American religion, but they prevailed more because of creative religious innovations than because of the mysterious hand of the frontier. The population on the frontier was scattered, so the Methodist practice of using itinerant rather than settled preachers enabled them to minister most efficiently and effectively to the people on the frontier. There were relatively few affluent persons on the frontier at first, and educational institutions were slow to develop, so Methodists and Baptists—who did not require their ministers to have formal educations and read the ancient languages—were best able to supply the needs of the region. Unpaid Baptist farmer-ministers, completely without pretensions, perfectly suited the frontier.

Both Baptists and Methodists were extremely energetic in their evangelistic efforts, and this tradition of ministerial activism has been a hallmark of American religion, especially since the disestablishment of the colonial state churches. Revival techniques such as the camp meeting, that deemphasized theology and made skilled use of emotion, appealed to settlers who lacked book learning, hungered for fellowship, and had none of the habits of restraint associated with the established societies on the eastern seaboard. Sweet saw the Methodists (and to a lesser degree the Baptists) as best equipped to meet the demands of the frontier, and as a result he saw them as the most representative Protestant denomination in America. Thus for Sweet, the frontier—again understood as a region, not a process—stood as the proving ground for American Christianity, a conclusion that has proved very durable and influential.

Sweet also described the role of the churches on the frontier, emphasizing how vigorous evangelical Protestantism influenced the people on the frontier. The argument that religious institutions, leaders, and ideas could themselves have a causative role was not Turnerian. For Sweet the churches were civilizing agents. On the rough and ready frontier with its individualizing tendencies and its atomized society, the church established local pockets of community life. Church disciplinary proceedings tamed the immorality and social disorder of the frontier by holding church members to a Biblical code of behavior.[7] Churches and their ministers often provided the first rudiments of an educational system on the frontier, and they provided a primi-

[7] Sweet, "The Churches as Moral Courts of the Frontier," *Church History*, 2 (Mar. 1933), 3-21.

tive social safety net for those who were ill, orphaned, widowed, and otherwise disadvantaged. In helping to tame the frontier the churches proved their worth, Sweet concluded, and the character of the resulting nation bore testimony to their essential role.

This basic Mode-Sweet interpretation that the churches that best adapted to the frontier were destined to be most influential in America, and that the successful adaptations largely characterized subsequent church development, dominated American religious historiography so completely for almost a half century that the arguments often were taken for granted, with no supporting documentation deemed necessary. Such automatic application of an explanatory scheme, in effect an off-the-shelf all-purpose interpretation, proved detrimental to fresh analysis. Whether it was the supposed nature of frontier life, or the emotional character of the religion that flourished there, the idea of a kind of peculiarly American "frontier religion" became a staple of religious history. Hence Leonard J. Trinterud in *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Reexamination of Colonial Presbyterianism* could write about "old traditions" being "sloughed off at the frontier" and "the creation of new forms and new orders adequate for preaching the Gospel in the frontier situation."[8] The landmark documentary history, *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*, edited by H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, likewise asserted that "the revivalism of the frontier especially made an impress on American religion that was to have far-reaching significance."[9]

Cultural historian Ralph H. Gabriel came close to summing up this frontier-religion hypothesis in 1950. "The folk religion of the exuberant, optimistic, and undisciplined frontier," he wrote, "represented a bizarre, but nonetheless genuine, expression to the spirit of romanticism. This religion had power. It helped to subdue the grosser evils of the frontier. It made an impress on American society that persisted far into the twentieth century."[10] Perhaps the last general history of American religion so to emphasize the frontier and the style

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[8] Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Reappraisal of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia 1949), 36-37.

[9] H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents* (2 vols., New York 1960-1963), I, 562.

[10] Ralph H. Gabriel, "Evangelical Religion and Popular Romanticism in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History*, 19 (Mar. 1950), 39. In his well-known book, *The Course of American Democratic Thought: An Intellectual History Since 1815* (New

of religion that developed there was Robert T. Handy's *History of the Churches in the United States and Canada*. Introducing his discussion of the Great Revival that began in Kentucky at the end of the eighteenth century, Handy set a familiar stage: "The social setting of frontier revivalism was quite different from that of the East, however, for life on the frontier was often hard, lonely, and dangerous. The civilizing amenities of the older sections were usually at a minimum . . . . In such settings, revivals sometimes reached peaks of undisciplined emotion."[11] Sweet would not have said it any differently.

The historiography of revivalism—and especially the Great Kentucky Revival—charts the rise and fall of this frontier hypothesis. The so-called Kentucky Revival, more than any other event in American religious history, seemed to incarnate "frontier revivalism" pure and simple. Catherine C. Cleveland's writing, *The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805,* interpreted the revival's origins in exactly the Turnerian terms both Mode and Sweet used several years later in their more general works.[12] It all seems predictable now: the frontier setting, the loneliness, the absence of good morals, the energetic efforts of various ministers, the emotionalism, the emergence of the camp meeting as a peculiarly effective adaptation to frontier needs. This focus on the frontier as a necessary ingredient for the revival's origin, for the raw emotionalism of the preaching, and especially for the development of the camp meeting as a quintessentially American religious institution, continued for four decades as a motif in such works as Charles A. Johnson's *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*[13] and Bernard Weisberger's *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact on Religion in America*.[14] Weisberger's book at times verges on unconscious caricature of the frontier interpretation. By the mid-1950s, however, religious historians already were beginning to critique the use of the frontier locale as an interpretative panacea.

York 1940), 33, Gabriel in similar fashion wrote: "The frontier was crude, turbulent, and godless. Evangelical Protestantism, more than any other single force, tamed it." See also Elizabeth K. Nottingham, *Methodism and the Frontier: Indiana Proving Ground* (New York 1941), for the continuing influence of Sweet; and Walter B. Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington, Ky. 1966).

[11] Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (New York 1976), 166.

[12] Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805* (Chicago 1916).

[13] Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time* (Dallas 1955).

[14] Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact on Religion in America* (Boston 1958).

Figure 4. Frederick Jackson Turner in his Office at the Historical Society Quarters in the Wisconsin Capitol ca.1892

Source: State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Whitney R. Cross in *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* launched a counter-interpretation that convincingly showed upstate New York to be a continuous incubator of revivalism long after the frontier period had passed.[15] Timothy L. Smith's influential study of urban religion, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War,* even more boldly rejected the primacy of the frontier interpretation. Smith made clear his challenge to the older view by claiming that "during the nineteenth century the vital center of Ameri-

[15] Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York 1950).

can Protestantism was in the cities rather than the rural West . . . . Revival measures were as proper in Boston as in Kentucky."[16]

In the 1965 textbook *Religion in America*, which immediately became a standard, Winthrop S. Hudson developed a sustained critique of the casual application of the frontier thesis to American religion and revivalism. Speaking of the eighteenth-century Great Awakening, Hudson wrote:

> Nor is the suggestion that the revivals were the product of the unsettled condition of frontier life an adequate explanation of a phenomenon that was equally widespread in both Britain and America. Furthermore, the communities along the Connecticut River and between New York and Philadelphia, where the revivals first appeared, were centers of an established agrarian economy rather than frontier settlements. Even after revivalism became an accepted feature of American religious life, revivals seldom occurred in an area until the frontier period was over; and they manifested themselves with equal fervor in many of the oldest communities.[17]

In similar fashion Hudson pointed out that during the revivals that began in the West about 1800, conditions were almost identical in much of Virginia and North Carolina. The frontier per se played little role in religious developments.[18] Sydney E. Ahlstrom reiterated this opinion bluntly in his influential book, *A Religious History of the American People*: "The creativeness of the frontier, or rather, the power of the frontier to alter or refashion whatever came into it, must be minimized."[19] Certainly this devaluing of the frontier has been reflected over the last two decades in a series of important studies of urban revivalism, ranging from Paul E. Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* with its heavy-handed social control thesis to Terry D. Bilhartz's *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening: Church and Society in Early National Baltimore*.[20] Historians no longer automatically associate revivals, even in the early nineteenth century, with the western frontier.

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[16] Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957; rev. ed., New York 1965), 9.

[17] Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York 1965), 60-61.

[18] *Ibid.*, 133.

[19] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven 1972), 453.

[20] Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1836* (New York 1978); Bilhartz, *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening in Early Nartional Baltimore* (Rutherford, N. J. 1986).

This questioning of the significance of the frontier on the development of American religion was central to my own study of what was at the time called the western or Kentucky revivals. Entitling my book *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind*, I attempted to shift the discussion of revival origins away from emphasis on raw frontier conditions and toward a consideration of the theological-intellectual world of the clergy and church members. (At the time I did not know the word mentalité; if I had, I would have used it to describe what I was trying to explicate.[21]) Consequently my interpretation began with the churches along the seaboard South. showing, for example, that the Methodists' use of itinerant ministers preaching across a broad circuit, and the Baptists' use of unpaid farmer-preachers, had always been characteristics of those two denominations and were not frontier adaptations. I discussed southern ministerial attitudes toward a perceived declension of religion, not just on the frontier but across the entire South from Virginia to Kentucky, and I contextualized this concern in the clergy's attitudes about God's role in history and the role of prayer. I discovered that the preconditions for a revival—a widely accepted belief system, a network of churches and ministers, a perception of social crisis that seems susceptible only to a providential solution—existed throughout the South. That the revival first erupted in Kentucky was more fortuitous than necessary or predictable, and given the similarity of conditions there to those elsewhere in the region, the revival quickly spread eastward from Kentucky eventually to envelop the entire South.

Nevertheless, the revivals that began in Kentucky were interpreted by contemporaries as something new because of their size, the emotional nature of some of the conversions, and the interdenominational involvement. And while I mentioned that emotional, large-scale, even outdoor religious services were not unknown in the older states (Methodist love feasts and quarterly meetings, Baptist association meetings, even Wesley preaching to huge outdoor crowds in England), I still described the camp meeting as a religious adaptation to frontier needs, though I did describe how it spread back across the entire South and soon became a peculiarly Methodist institution. The frontier thesis was far from dead. Two years after my study Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., in *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845*, provided a structural analysis of the camp meetings that fit neatly into the traditional frontier analysis.

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[21] John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington, Ky. 1972).

[22] Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville, Tenn. 1974).

In a brief book, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (1976), which to a degree represented a second iteration of my earlier thesis, I described how the camp meeting revival was adapted via the protracted meeting to become a regular feature of urban church life.[23] Since that time, several recent books have considerably refined and extended my efforts to situate the Kentucky revivals in a broader geographical and longer temporal context. These studies implicitly dismiss the Turnerian idea that the frontier smashed the intellectual, cultural, and institution baggage brought from Europe or the East ("strips off the garments of civilization" is Turner's phrase) and created a new set of novel American attitudes and practices.

If my book suggested an alternative view, Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communions and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* aggressively advances a counter-interpretation of the frontier.[24] For Schmidt frontier camp meetings were only a New World replication of an old Presbyterian regional communion service that lasted several days, attracted huge, expectant crowds, and created intense emotions. The foremost and legendary of such eighteenth-century "holy fairs" occurred at Cambuslang, Scotland, in 1742, and it is clear that the first so-called camp meetings at Gasper River and Cane Ridge, Kentucky, emerged from similar scheduled Presbyterian communion meetings. Interestingly though, none of the Presbyterian ministers immediately involved at first recognized the genealogical connection between camp meetings and these earlier Scottish Presbyterian practices. Instead, they usually compared them to a modern-day version of Pentecost. Still, I think it fair to say that this Scottish communion institution was one of the ingredients, however unintended, that fed the camp meeting phenomenon in Kentucky. Paul K. Conkin's recent interpretation, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost*, despite its title, largely accepts Schmidt's conclusions about Scottish antecedents.[25] Both works emphasize the staying power of religious ideas, habits, and practices across time and distance.

Russell E. Richey's recent and sensitive meditation on *Early American Methodism* offers yet another candidate for an institutional precursor of the frontier camp meeting, namely the late-eighteenth-century Methodist practice known as the quarterly conference.[26] These meetings were

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[23] John B. Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington 1976), 129-130.

[24] Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communions and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton 1989).

[25] Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wisc. 1990).

[26] Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, Ind. 1991), ch. 2.

often held outdoors because the crowds of Methodist faithful, lay and clergy, who attended exceeded the capacity of available church buildings. Especially vigorous preaching marked these mass gatherings producing intense emotional results; a centerpiece of the event was a communion service. An apt phrase often used at the time to describe the results of this experience was "melting time," a reference both to the softening of hearts and the flowing of joyful tears. While there was some Methodist ecclesiastical business completed at such quarterly conferences, in every other respect they exhibited the characteristics of the later camp meeting. John Wesley, of course, had also often spoken to huge outdoor crowds in England that reacted emotionally to his ringing sermons. Richey is careful not to claim Methodist ownership of the invention of the camp meeting, but he does suggest strong Methodist roots for what, intermingled with both Presbyterian and Baptist practices, helped create an authentically American religious institution.

No historian has yet stepped forward to advance the thesis that the Baptist associational meetings in early Virginia and North Carolina served as models for the camp meeting. Here too, emotional preaching to large crowds that often could not fit in a church building typified nonfrontier Baptist practices that seem to foreshadow what later evolved in frontier Kentucky only to spread quickly back across the region and, in fact, throughout much of America. Thus, there seems to be no shortage of eligible precursors to a supposedly unique frontier revival form.

The interpretative thrust of these recent studies is to deny that the frontier was either the necessary or the exclusive locale in which revivals could begin, proliferate, and prosper, and to refute the argument that the frontier somehow created novel institutions little related to what had gone before. The result of the new scholarship has been a welcome analysis of urban religion, greater recognition that so-called frontier conditions and social needs were not as unique as previously suggested, and a better understanding of just how resilient and flexible religious institutions could be in changed or evolving environments. At the same time, the revisionist rush to discover the roots of the camp meeting revival in Scottish communion practices or in Methodist or Baptist activities in the East perhaps conceals too much of how really different was the *synthesis* of these background influences when they first came together, unexpectedly, in Kentucky in 1800. Certainly those contemporaries who experienced the frontier camp meetings perceived them as strikingly novel religious developments, not familiar practices in a new locale. And that perception of novelty led the camp meeting to be associated with providential intervention in history, an interpretation that credited God more than Turner's forest with the camp meetings' quick adaptation and

sweep across the South. We must be careful not to underestimate how creative such hybrid institutions can be. The perception of the miraculous nature of the camp meeting changed over time, of course, and it ultimately became a routinized revival instrument.

Turner, along with Mode and Sweet, led us to overvalue the role of the frontier. In reaction, we must not overvalue and isolate particular practices that were imported to the frontier. The historian's task is never to simplify the past but rather to see multiple causes and complex interactions. We have moved beyond the Turner thesis even though—truth be told—we still seldom employ definitional precision when we discuss the frontier. But Turner's ideas, and the counter-interpretations they have inspired, have caused a great outpouring of analytical effort to be focused on frontier religion. As a result, our understanding of the phenomenon has become far more sophisticated as we have learned how to contextualize what happened, for example, at Cane Ridge. History is largely the art of enhancing and enriching the number of connections we see between one event and others removed in time, geography, and domain. Frederick Jackson Turner, his disciples, and his critics together have widened the range of interpretative connections in the study of American religion.

Frederick Jackson Turner Overlooked the Ladies

Glenda Riley

Like John Adams during the mid-1770s, Frederick Jackson Turner often failed to "remember the ladies." Although Turner was an observant and insightful historian, he overlooked the role of women in the United States' westward migration. In his path-breaking essay of 1893, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," as well as in later articles and books, Turner characterized America's expansionist phase as a male phenomenon.

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By ignoring women, Turner helped create a tunnel vision that his followers perpetuated in the area of study he loved—sectionalism and the American West. Instead of enlarging Turner's viewpoint to include such groups as women, they supported and repeated Turner's primary arguments. Eminent historian Carl Becker frequently maintained that the frontier was a process rather than a geographic place, that it inculcated individualism into Americans, and that idealism and freedom ever prevailed within its bounds. Frederic L. Paxson supported the continuing validity of Turner's ideas pretty much as he had originally stated them.[1] Moreover, Turner's ideas encouraged such social commentators as Herbert Croly to conclude that America's "virgin wilderness" made the United States a "Land of Promise," and such novelists as Hamlin Garland to proclaim "a faith in the open spaces." None of these Turnerian commentators considered the effects of wilderness and space on women.[2]

Why Turner ignored women and the results of that omission are seldom explored, but on this, the one-hundredth anniversary of Turner's famous address, both questions deserve examination. If we are to free ourselves totally from this oversight in Turner's thesis, it is necessary to understand his thinking rather than accept superficial explanations for his neglect of women. Probably the most common reason given for Turner's inattention to women is that his omission was typical of his times, that few people were sensitive to women's roles and contributions during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Perhaps John Adams, a man of the late eighteenth century, can be excused on such grounds, but Turner, a man of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, should not get off so easily.

How could a man hailed as an astute observer and critical thinker turn a blind eye to the significant changes women had experienced since John and Abigail Adams's day? Born in 1861 in Portage, Wisconsin, Turner lived during one of the most turbulent eras in American history. In Portage, he participated in the development of a western town, watching as men and women mold their own lives and contribute to the formation of the region and the nation. Between the time Turner left Portage in 1880 to seek a bachelor's degree in Madison and his death in

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[1] Carl Becker, "Kansas," in Guy Stanton Ford, ed., *Essays in American History Dedicated to Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York 1951), 85-111; Frederic L. Paxson, "A Generation of the Frontier Hypothesis, 1893-1932," *Pacific Historical Review*, 2 (Mar. 1933), 34-51.

[2] Herbert D. Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (New York 1909), 3-7; Hamlin Garland, "The Passing of the Frontier," *The Dial*, 64 (Oct. 4, 1919), 285.

1932 in Pasadena, California, he came into contact with thousands of students, worked as a journalist, served as a professor at the University of Wisconsin between 1889 and 1910 and at Harvard University between 1910 and 1924, and later as research associate at the Huntington Library.[3] Among numerous other events, during his seventy years Turner lived through the well-publicized rise in numbers of women in paid employment and the professions, the increasing momentum of the woman suffrage movement beginning in 1890 and triumphing in 1920, and the frequent debates regarding what were then known as the "woman question" and the "new" woman.

Moreover, in his personal life Turner spent a great deal of time with women and regarded them with affection and esteem. Turner credited his mother, Mary Hanford Turner, a former schoolteacher, with helping develop his fondness for books and ideas. Later, Turner doted on his wife, Caroline Mae Sherwood, and their three children. In 1897, for example, Turner inquired about the social possibilities for Mae should he accept an appointment at Princeton University.[4] Turner was a devoted family man, who never fully recovered from the deaths in 1899 of his five-year-old daughter, Mae Sherwood, and his seven-year old son, Jackson Allen. According to a friend, his children's deaths "tinctured" Turner's life until its end.[5] After this tragedy, Turner increasingly centered his personal life on Mae and the surviving daughter, Dorothy. In 1905, Turner rejected historian Max Farrand's suggestion that he take a leave-of-absence for a month each year to research and write; he feared such a practice would create a "nomadic life" for his family, and he was unwilling to leave them behind. He added that "a man owes something to his family as well as to scholarship."[6]

Not only did Turner include women in virtually all aspects of his personal life, but he welcomed them into his classroom. Just as he sent daughter Dorothy to college, he also encouraged women students who sought him out. Louise Phelps Kellogg recalled that she participated in both the first "West" class that Turner offered and his seminar. Like the men in the seminar, she and the one other female student worked in "comradeship" with Turner. In 1938, Kellogg, who for more than

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[3] For a detailed account of Turner's life and work see Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York 1973).

[4] Turner to Woodrow Wilson, Nov. 8, 1896, in Wilbur R. Jacobs, ed., *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner, With Selections From His Correspondence* (New Haven, Conn. 1968) 27-28.

[5] Quoted *ibid.*, 12.

[6] Turner to Max Farrand, June 23, 1905, *ibid.*, 35, 37.

forty years served as editor, lecturer, and author at the Wisconsin Historical Society, declared that Turner "had a greater influence in reshaping American historiography than any other of his generation."[7] Turner too had kind words for his women students. He not only expressed pride in Kellogg's achievements, but likewise took credit for training others such as Helen Blair, who in 1911 dedicated to Turner her *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley*.[8]

Turner also counted women among his many friends. In 1908, he regaled Farrand with an account of a month he and his family spent in the Maine woods camping and boating with several other men and women.[9] Then, during his Harvard years, Turner formed a fast friendship with a Bostonian, Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper, a socialite, philanthropist, and suffragist who shared Turner's passion for the American West. Beginning in 1910, Hooper and Turner visited, corresponded, and tried to build a collection of western history source materials at Harvard. As their friendship grew, Hooper began to call Turner "Historicus." In 1915, Hooper wrote to Turner that "you and all you stand for are a great asset in my garden of friends." In 1931, Hooper again mentioned that she regarded their "comfortable" friendship as one of her most important resources. Turner, who addressed Hooper as "Dear Lady," returned her esteem. In 1915, he assured her that, "you are the best thing I have discovered in New England," and in 1930, "How much I value and appreciate you!"[10]

Obviously, Turner was attuned to women and aware of their concerns. Yet he persistently overlooked women, their roles, and their contributions in his scholarship. When Turner did mention women, he portrayed them as simply part of the family unit. As men pushed their families westward, Turner explained, "daughters walked beside

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[7] Louise Phelps Kellogg, "The Passing of a Great Teacher: Frederick Jackson Turner," *Historical Outlook*, 23 (Oct. 1932), 270-272; Kellogg, "Preface," in Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Fulmer Mood (Madison, Wisc. 1938), ix.

[8] Turner to Constance Lindsay Skinner, Mar. 15, 1922, in Jacobs, ed., *Historical World of Turner*, 59.

[9] Turner to Max Farrand, Sept. 27, 1908, *ibid.*, 40-43.

[10] Ray Allen Billington, ed., *"Dear Lady": The Letters* of *Frederick Jackson Turner and Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper, 1910-1932* (San Marino, Cal. 1970), 70, 27, 428. Billington also argued that Turner was a "good" and "sensitive" man in "Frederick Jackson Turner: The Image and the Man," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 3 (Apr. 1972), 137-152.

Figure 5. Turner's Seminar at Wisconsin.

Source: State Historial Society of Wisconsin.

the mother, who rode on the horse."[11] And in 1897, Turner noted that while successful western entrepreneurs sought political influence and sent their sons to college, their wives and daughters made "extensive visits to Europe."[12] Nearly all Turner's historical actors were male, wore hunting shirts, brandished weapons, and wielded axes. "Before long," Turner wrote of his male pioneer, "he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion."[13]

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[11] Wilbur R. Jacobs, ed., *Frederick Jackson Turner's Legacy: Unpublished Writings in American History* (1965; rep., Lincoln, Neb. 1977), 154.

[12] Frederick Jackson Turner, "Dominant Forces in Western Life," *Atlantic Monthly*, 79 (Apr. 1987), 439.

[13] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *American Historical Association Annual Report for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C. 1894), 201.

Reconciling Turner's sensitive and affectionate personal treatment of women with his neglectful and even patronizing treatment of them in his scholarly writing requires more than the lame excuse that few people in Turner's day paid much attention to women. Rather, this essay maintains that Turner neglected women in his scholarship for four major reasons. The easiest to identify is that Turner studied, taught, and made friends in a largely male enclave where his oversight never was challenged.[14] He discussed his ideas with such people as his good friend Woodrow Wilson, who as a political scientist and aspiring politician believed in the evolution of institutions and emphasized the need for strong (male) national leadership to bind together the sections of the United States.[15] Such others as southern historian Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, once a colleague of Turner's at the University of Wisconsin and a lifelong friend, declared that Turner's portraits of frontier society manifested "brilliance in analysis and perfection in phrase." No modifications or additions to Turner's thought seemed necessary to the men of his profession.[16]

A second reason for Turner's dismissal of women was his tendency to draw heavily on earlier writers, all of whom overlooked women. Although his supporters, especially his student Carl Becker, maintained that Turner's thesis was a "novel doctrine," critics have pointed out that Turner borrowed from a number of other writers.[17] Among these was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that a return to nature would improve society (meaning men); when he commented on women, Rousseau maintained that they existed to serve and care for men. Others included James Fenimore Cooper, who elevated the habits of his pioneer folk-heroes, primarily males, to a historical force and Ralph Waldo Emerson who, as early as 1844,

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[14] See, for example, the listing of leaders in the American Historical Association in Clarence Winthrop Bowen, "Congress of American Scholars," *Harper's Weekly*, 8 (Dec. 25, 1909), 24-25.

[15] Quoted in E. David Cronon, "Woodrow Wilson, Frederick Jackson Turner, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 71 (Summer 1988), 296. See also Woodrow Wilson, "The Making of a Nation," *Atlantic Monthly*, 80 (July 1897), 1-14; Wendell H. Stephenson, ed., "The Influence of Woodrow Wilson on Frederick Jackson Turner," *Agricultural History*, 19 (Oct. 1945), 249-253; and George C. Osborn, "Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Jackson Turner," *New Jersey Historical Society Proceedings*, 74 (July 1956), 208-229.

[16] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, "The Traits and Contributions of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Agricultural History*, 19 (Jan. 1945), 21-23.

[17] Carl Becker, review of Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, in *The Nation*, 3 (Nov. 10, 1920), 536.

emphasized the West's Americanizing influence in his lecture, "The Young American," also meaning men. After the Civil War, journalist E. L. Godkin also wrote only of men when he pointed to "frontier life" as the distinguishing feature of American society and commented on the frontier's relation to the "democratic tide." So did Italian social philosopher Achille Loria, who developed a "free land" theory of history from whom Turner borrowed a central feature of his frontier thesis.[18] Because Turner knew of the work of these men as well as Francis Parkman and Theodore Roosevelt, his emphasis on the West was far from unique; indeed, the West had been a symbol of American thought, and of American nationalism, since the early nineteenth century.[19]

Turner's reliance on earlier views of the American West naturally led him to adopt traditional ideas regarding women. By borrowing from writers ranging from Rousseau to Loria, Turner absorbed social constructs that not only subsumed women under the generic category "men," but also viewed women as non-actors. Therefore, although Turner argued that historians should view the past through present concerns, the contemporary significance of such issues as women's rights and roles escaped him.[20] At least partly because he absorbed older interpretations of women as passive beings who were secondary in the overall scheme, he selected nationalism and American character, meaning male character, as the dominant issues through which to view the past.

Already at a disadvantage regarding the importance of women in history, Turner suffered a third limitation: a decided fascination with political and economic explanations. Although Turner claimed that his experience as a journalist, especially the years he spent under the tutelage of his editor father, Andrew Jackson Turner, gave him a sense of reality and forced him to see "the connections of many fac-

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[18] Lewis Mumford, "The Romanticism of the Pioneer," in *The Golden Day: A Study in American Experience and Culture* (New York 1926), 47-81; Herman Clarence Nixon, "Precursors of Turner in the Interpretation of the American Frontier," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 28 (Jan. 1929), 83-89; Lee Benson, "The Historical Background of Turner's Frontier Essay," *Agricultural History*, 25 (Apr. 1951), 59-82.

[19] John Opie, "Frederick Jackson Turner, the Old West, and the Formation of a National Mythology," *Environmental Review*, 5 (Summer 1981), 79-91; Vernon E. Mattson, "West as Myth," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 24 (Jan. 1988), 9-12.

[20] See Frederick Jackson Turner, "Social Forces in American History," *American Historical Review*, 16 (Jan. 1911), 217-233, for his definition of current issues and forces through which to study the past.

tors with the purely political," he in fact developed a political view of history.[21] According to Martin Ridge, "Turner expressed himself with the imagery of a poet and speculated about the past with the language of a seer" yet "at heart . . . believed in economic and political history."[22]

After all, Turner did his Ph.D. work in international law, principles of economics, church history, and the history of politics and economic thought. He taught political and constitutional history at Madison. In 1891 he announced a new course titled "Economic and Social [meaning social forces rather than groups of people] History of the United States."[23] Finally, Turner's mentor, Professor William Francis Allen, had studied the Roman empire from the standpoint of its economic expansion and political institutions. Clearly, few influences in his training or professional life pushed Turner toward a scholarly consideration of women or any other specific social group. Instead, when innovative impulses struck, Turner suggested as additional research topics agriculture, public lands, and urban development.[24]

Finally, Turner considered himself a scientific historian who sought knowledge of causal dynamics and larger explanations rather than the deeds and achievements of individuals or of such groups of people as women.[25] Unlike gifted "lay" historians such as Francis Parkman, Theodore Roosevelt, and James Ford Rhodes, who emphasized individual agency and specific episodes, Turner and his graduate-school-trained colleagues focused upon processes. As early as 1887-1888, while still working on his master's degree, Turner wrote that he preferred to deal with historical materials from a "ge-

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[21] Turner to Merle Curti, Aug. 8, 1928, in Jacobs, ed., *Historical World of Turner*, 7.

[22] Martin Ridge, "The American West: From Frontier to Region," *The New Mexico Historical Review*, 64 (Apr. 1989), 129. See also Murray Kane, "Some Considerations on the Frontier Concept of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 27 (Dec. 1940), 379-400, who maintains that Turner was an economic historian.

[23] Fulmer Mood, "Turner's Formative Period," in Mood, ed., *Writings of Turner*, 20, 35.

[24] Turner to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Apr. 18, 1922, in Jacobs, ed., *World of Turner*, 155.

[25] William Cronon, "Turner's First Stand: The Significance of Significance in American History," in Richard W. Etulain, ed., *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians* (Albuquerque 1991), 73-101.

netic standpoint," pursuing over-arching topics rather than individuals or types of people.[26]

Turner hoped to identify the origins of institutions, or what he called the "social foundations" of American history, while avoiding chronology, narrative, and even specific institutional studies. As one of his admirers noted, Turner was an "interpreter" and thus always "impatient of narrative for its own sake."[27] In his search for wider contexts, for organizing principles, for the universal rather than the particular, Turner studied masses of people, types rather than individuals, *the* people rather than people themselves.

As his thought developed, Turner thus defined frontier in a way that made it a series of processes. In 1896, for example, Turner described the West as a "form" of society and a "constructive force" rather than a geographic area.[28] In 1906, he wrote of "institutions," "conditions," and "interests."[29] Two years later, he declared that "the story of individual leaders, and narrative of events sank into insignificance" in the face of the migration of people and development of society.[30] And in 1911, he spoke of "forces," "currents," and "movements."[31]

Turner's own words made clear that his view of history had little room for such specific groups as women. As Carl Becker explained, Turner assumed that "commonplace people, acting in commonplace ways . . . determine the social process." According to Becker, Turner was an expositor who was interested in larger forces than individuals.[32] This approach made people little more than categories—Indians, settlers, immigrants, farmers, or the "hunter type."[33] Women simply inhabited each of the various categories. Therefore, even when Turner studied such rich and revealing sources as census records, rather than seize upon numbers of marriages, children, and

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[26] Mood, "Turner's Formative Period," 12.

[27] Joseph Schafer, "Turner's Early Writings," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 22 (Dec. 1938), 217.

[28] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, 78 (Sept. 1896), 289.

[29] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Colonization of the West, 1820-1830," *American Historical Review*, 11 (Jan. 1906), 303-327.

[30] Jacobs, ed., *Turner's Legacy*, 170.

[31] Frederick Jackson Turner, "Social Forces in American History," *American Historical Review*, 16 (Jan. 1911), 217-233.

[32] Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics* (New York 1935), 214.

[33] Jacobs, ed., *Turner's Legacy*, 153-155.

gainfully employed females as useful data, he concentrated upon population density and voting statistics.

As a result of these four limiting influences on his thought, Turner became a major myth-maker of the scholarly world.[34] He was aware of some of his biases; in opening lectures he often apologized for the need to make generalizations in the face of conflicting or nonexistent evidence, observers' prejudices, and distorting contemporary values.[35] Still, he failed to note his omission of women and continued to disseminate masculine generalizations regarding the American West. Proudly, Turner passed on a male-dominated West to generations of scholars. One of his favorite boasts was that he had not only originated the course "History of the West," but had trained "a considerable portion" of its instructors."[36]

Turner's narrow perspective helped perpetuate a lack of historical knowledge concerning women in the American West, a vacuum that popular culture happily filled throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Long bereft of guidance from historians, a sizeable number of writers, artists, and performers invented mythologized western women. Because no women existed in the historian's West, shapers of popular culture supplied interpretations that fell into two types: images based upon traditional beliefs regarding American women and those derived from more modern conceptions of women.

On the one hand, writers, artists, and film-makers who resisted changes in women's status usually thought of western women as inferior beings in need of protection. In their view, western women often fell victim to harsh climate, hard work, or the supposed "rape, pillage, and burn" mentality of Native Americans. Dime novels especially portrayed western women as delicate creatures in need of rescue, but thousands of others pursued a similar theme. In 1892, Emmeline Fuller's *Left by the Indians*, a saga of torture imposed upon defenseless white women, gained best-seller status.[37] From novelist

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[34] Lee Benson, "The Historian as Mythmaker: Turner and the Closed Frontier," in David M. Ellis, ed., *The Frontier in American Development: Essays in Honor of Paul Wallace Gates* (Ithaca 1969), 3-19; Opie, "Frederick Jackson Turner," 79-91. For Turner's rhetorical powers, see Ronald H. Carpenter, "Wisconsin's Rhetorical Historian, Frederick Jackson Turner: A Review Essay," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 68 (Spring 1985), 199-203.

[35] Jacobs, ed., *Turner's Legacy*, 81.

[36] Turner to Constance Lindsay Skinner, Mar. 15, 1922, in Jacobs, ed., *Historical World of Turner*, 57.

[37] Emeline Fuller, *Left by the Indians: Story of My Life* (Mount Vernon, Iowa 1892).

Hamlin Garland's despondent "Pioneer Mother" to artist W. D. Koerner's woeful "Madonna of the Prairie" to Hollywood's female flowers, popular culture replaced Turner's invisible women with vulnerable ones.

On the other hand, image-makers who supported and even applauded changes in women's status generally promoted active images of western women: the cowgirl, shooter, heroine, and survivor. The very summer that Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his now-famous address on the grounds of the World Fair in Chicago, Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West played outside its gates. Literally under Turner's nose, Annie Oakley—the archetypal representation of the hardy and competent western woman—performed astounding feats with rifles and pistols, while cowgirls, among others, circled the arena on horseback and thrilled the audience with a variety of stunts. Unlike Turner, Cody realized that women had helped develop the West and he understood that females in his audiences wanted to learn about such women. Thus, Turner's and other historians' default enhanced Cody's opportunity to attract crowds to his particular version of western women.

Writers also supplied the public with strong and daring western women. From Ned Buntline to Prentiss Ingraham, dime novelists increasingly exchanged female victims for heroines. Then, in 1927 social commentator Ellsworth Huntington did what Turner had not done: he connected the West to the superiority of American women. Writing in *The Nation*, Huntington argued that American women were brave, bold, competent, ambitious, and even unique because of the nation's "pioneer period." The frontier had weeded out the weak and had stimulated surviving women to great achievements. Huntington even took his version of the frontier thesis one step farther than Turner; because of women's "more sensitive nervous organization," the frontier had influenced women *more* than men.[38]

Clearly, popular culture supplied questionable assumptions and suppositions to fill the void that Turner and other professional historians created. Purveyors of popular culture also failed to apply scholarly analysis and rigor to such larger questions as the significance of westward expansion to women; the effect of the frontier on women; whether the West provided a safety-valve for women, as Turner argued it had for men; or how Turner's frontier could have been demo-

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[38] Ellsworth Huntington, "Why the American Woman is Unique," *The Nation*, 125 (Aug. 3, 1927), 105-107.

cratic when it denied the female segment of its population the right to vote and hold office.[39] But so long as the field lay uncontested by scholars, popularizers enjoyed a relatively free hand.

Over time, of course, a number of historians began to recognize weaknesses in Turner's thesis and the limitations it imposed upon others. For instance, historian Charles Beard judged Turner's thesis as "too broad and sweeping" and noted the absence of organized labor in Turner's analysis.[40] Others called for consideration of Native Americans, Hispanics, African Americans, Germans and other immigrants, and such religious groups as Catholics, Mormons, and Presbyterians. Still others noticed the absence of urban history, of regional geographical analysis, and of comparisons between the American West and other frontiers.[41] In 1964, historian David Potter indicted Turner for assuming that "the characteristics of American men are the characteristics of the American people, and that since women are people, the characteristics of the American people are the characteristics of American women."[42] Here at last Potter had revealed the lack of women and asked for their inclusion in studies of regionalism and the West.

In the meantime, a few scholars, such as Mary Hargreaves and T.A. Larson, began to study western women and pose questions concerning their lives.[43] During the mid-1970s, this growing interest in western women erupted in a series of conference papers, articles, and books. No longer content to allow popular culture to fabricate the

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[39] Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier," 221.

[40] Charles Beard's reviews of Turner's, *The Frontier in American History*, in *The New Republic*, 79 (Feb. 16, 1921), 349-350, and "The Frontier in American History," *ibid.*, 97 (Feb. 1939), 359-362.

[41] For an overview of the fate of Turner's thesis after his death see Howard R. Lamar, "Frederick Jackson Turner," in Marcus Cunliffe and Robin W. Winks, eds., *Pastmasters: Some Essays on American Historians* (New York 1969), 74-109.

[42] David M. Potter, "American Women and the American Character," in John A. Hague, ed., *American Character and Culture: Some Twentieth Century Perspectives* (Deland, Fla. 1964), 66. See also David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago, 1954), 206. Another leading historian who changed his mind about the Turner thesis was John D. Hicks, "Our Pioneer Heritage: A Reconsideration," *Prairie Schooner*, 30 (Winter 1956), 359-361.

[43] Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Homesteading and Homemaking on the Plains: A Review," *Agricultural History*, 47 (Apr. 1973), 156-163; Hargreaves, "Women in the Agricultural Settlement of the Northern Plains," *Agricultural History*, 50 (Jan. 1976), 5-16; T.A. Larson, "Dolls, Vassals, and Drudges—Pioneer Women in the West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 3 (Jan. 1972), 5-16; Larson, "Women's Role in the American West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 24 (July 1974), 2-11.

lives of western women, a growing number of scholarly historians rejected Turner's male-oriented view of the West and began to write women into western history. Partly as a result of New Left criticism of historical scholarship in general, and partly due to the emergence of the contemporary feminist movement, historians of women began the long process of reconstructing the history of women in the West. Historians in both East and West soon devised a three-fold mission: to add women to the historical West, to revise popular culture images, and to develop sophisticated scholarship regarding western women.[44]

Unlike Turner, many of these scholars also attempted to analyze the significance of the frontier for women and assess the effects of westward expansion upon women. But they did not arrive at the conclusions Turner would have reached even if he had remembered women. Given Turner's outlooks, he would have surely categorized women along racial and ethnic lines, just as he did men. Thus, Native American women would have been "Indians," the receivers of "civilization," while Anglo women would have been "Americans," part of the advancing inculcators of "civilization." Because Turner concluded that the frontier built Americans' strength and independence, he presumably would have believed that the frontier also strengthened and liberated American women, at least Anglo-American women. Turner suggested as much in a 1926 study of pioneers' children. In one page devoted to daughters of the pioneers, Turner mentioned such successful women as Chicago reformer Jane Addams and Wisconsin suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt; he also noted that of the twelve women selected in 1925 as "the greatest women of America," one-third were daughters of pioneer families.[45]

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[44] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York 1979); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven 1979); Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierswomen: Iowa as a Case Study," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (Apr. 1977), 189-202; Riley, *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience* (Ames 1981); Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque 1982); Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York 1982); Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," *Frontiers*, 7 (1984), 1-8; Susan Armitage, "Women and Men in Western History: A Stereotypical Vision," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 16 (Oct. 1985), 380-395; Paula Petrik, "The Gentle Tamers in Transition: Women in the Trans-Mississippi West," *Feminist Studies*, 11 (Fall 1985), 677-694.

[45] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Children of the Pioneers," *Yale Review*, 15 (July 1926), 645-670.

Modern historians of women take a very different approach to western women, thus escaping what one historian has described as Turner's "mischievous" and "confining" influence.[46] While they consider dynamics, forces, and larger explanations, they also study groups and individuals. Consequently, they analyze the significance of the frontier and the effects of westward expansion on Native, Mexican, Anglo, African, and Asian American women; at the same time they recognize and respect individuality within those groups caused by social class, religion, age, education, marital status, and other factors.[47] Increasingly, historians of western women also maintain that they must study women before and after the advent of the frontier, that it formed only one part of western history.

Clearly, the revolution in women's status and recognition that Abigail Adams threatened in 1776 is well underway. Although John Adams ignored Abigail's counsel about including "the ladies" in the nation's new government and Frederick Jackson Turner evidently went unadvised on the matter of including them in western history, modern historians of western women agree with Abigail: the women must be remembered. These historians not only write women into the history of the West and revise popular images at every turn, but are

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[46] Michael P. Malone, "Beyond the Last Frontier: Toward a New Approach in Western American History," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 20 (Nov. 1989), 409-427.

[47] See, for example, Lawrence B. de Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," *Pacific Historical Review*, 49 (May 1980), 285-313; Yuji Ichioka, "*Amerika Nadeshiko:* Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States, 1900-1924," *ibid.*, 339-357; Mario T. García, "The Chicana in American History: The Mexican Women of El Paso, 1880-1910—A Case Study," *ibid.*, 315-337; Jane Lecompte, "The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico, 1821-1846," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 12 (Jan. 1981), 17-35; Albert L. Hurtado, "Hardly a Farm House—A Kitchen Without Them: Indian and White Households on the California Borderland Frontier in 1860," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 13 (July 1982), 145-170; Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque 1987); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York 1987); Elizabeth Jameson, "Toward a Multicultural History of Women in the Western United States," *Signs*, 13 (Summer 1988), 761-791; Glenda Riley, "American Daughters: Black Women in the West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 38 (Spring 1988), 14-27; Frances R. Conly, "Martina Didn't Have a Covered Wagon: A Speculative Reconstruction," *The Californian*, 7 (Mar.-Aug. 1989), 4-54; and Antonia I. Castañeda, "Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish-Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California," *Frontiers*, 11 (1990), 8-20.

also asking myriad questions about women in the West. Abigail's mutiny may have had to wait two hundred years, but scholars who decided that western women deserved their share of attention have launched a splendid insurrection. And if Turner the historian would have been puzzled, Turner the human being surely would have approved.

African American History and the Frontier Thesis

Margaret Washington

> "Each age finds it necessary to reconsider at least some portions of the past, from points of view furnished by new conditions which reveal the influence and significance of forces not adequately known by the historians of the previous generation."[1]

Frederick Jackson Turner and other historians of the Progressive Era, such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., and Charles Beard, found no place for race or gender in their perspectives on American history. To these historians, even slavery and Reconstruction were important primarily because of their impact on white America and white institutions. Schlesinger ignored black history in his writings but served on the Council of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and encouraged his black students, Rayford Logan and John Hope Franklin, who chose black history topics. In his scholarship, Charles Beard dismissed egalitarian and humanistic principles in regard to the Fourteenth Amendment, interpreting it merely as a conspiratorial move to promote and protect corporations; yet according to Richard Hofstadter, Beard boasted of a liberal Quaker heritage, a grandfather who harbored fugitive slaves, and a father who challenged racial prejudice. On the other hand, Turner came from unreconstructed Jacksonian stock (his father was named Andrew Jackson

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[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "Social Forces in American History," *American Historical Review*, 16 (Jan. 1911), 225.

Turner). Turner's biographer, Ray Allen Billington, noted that Turner borrowed the prejudice and bigotry as well as the idealism of the West. He viewed immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as "a menace to traditional values and institutions," shared contemporary prejudices against Jews, and on at least two occasions stated that the Fifteenth Amendment's guarantee of black franchise was unwise.[2] The Progressive Era was, in the words of contemporary journalist and activist Ray Stannard Baker, "for whites only." Nevertheless, progressive historians introduced a school of thought based upon economic and political conflict, and Turner's insistence that American distinctiveness derived from a pattern of sociological processes related to westward expansion was central to this paradigm.

In his 1893 address, "The Significance of the Frontier," Turner viewed American expansionism as a movement of social development, from colonial times to 1890, with white Americans successively advancing into "free land," establishing "superior" institutions, and spreading "civilization," via democracy, economic power, and individual freedom. According to Turner, as the nation moved west, each region—the Atlantic frontier, the Indian trader's frontier, the rancher's frontier, the farmer's frontier, and frontier army posts—introduced its unique characteristics and contributed largely to the making of the "American character." Strong, motivated, self-reliant settlers took advantage of the frontier's unlimited opportunities and thrust themselves to the top of society. "Rugged individualism" and "free land," which provided a "safety valve," were nurturing and regenerative forces that successive waves of white settlers experienced.[3]

Neither Turner's message nor his historical vision of American expansion were original. Scholars like Richard Slotkin have pointed out that Turner articulated a long-accepted myth. Insofar as mythmaking aims to create and control a national reality, to operate as a source of power, the frontier myth succeeded for many years. Through acting out and retelling over generations, the myth came to

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[2] August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980* (Urbana 1986) 3, 46, 90, 117, 129; Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parkington* (New York 1970), 61-63, 167-170; Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York 1973), 436-437.

[3] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in Everett E. Edwards, ed., *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner, With a List of All His Works* (Madison, Wisc. 1938), 185-229.

embody virtues that defined its participants as heroes. As Slotkin illustrates, the "frontier psychology" began when Anglo-Americans met Indians, and was perpetuated through violent confrontation justified through sacred, social, and psychological rationalizations, as well as economic and political expediency. Myth became not only perceived reality but scholarly, historical truth. Myth also became intricately tied to ideology.[4] Although Slotkin is concerned with much more than the place of race in the "national character," he understands how racial character was imbedded in the mythologization of American history, and its extension to the "frontier psychology."

Even before Turner, white Americans firmly believed in the culture of distinctiveness, which was, in turn, fueled by "frontier psychology." Turner was more than a product of his time. He was the griot for a tradition that in important ways continues within the fabric of American cultural and historical perceptions. Frontier psychology sustained Manifest Destiny, capitalism, and Social Darwinism; it supported violence against the "other," expansionism outside American borders, and racial exclusivity. This is demonstrated historically each time the nation goes to war. Moreover, "frontier psychology" has helped to define American historiography, sometimes pseudo-history, and also its political culture, which is why for historians like Turner certain participants in the American frontier experience remained invisible.

Moving beyond Frederick Jackson Turner involves observing the frontier more as a metaphor, and less as an actual evocation of "national character." Billington once noted that Turner offered no tangible or convincing evidence to support his thesis. The true significance of Turner's sweeping generalizations, exaggerations, and romanticizations, wrote Billington, was their challenging assertions.[5] There is much to challenge.

What impact did Frederick Jackson Turner's highly regarded 1893 address on democracy, the West, and the significance of the frontier have on the black experience? From Turner's perspective the answer is none. He makes no mention of blacks, and their role in frontier development probably never crossed his mind. But despite Turner's omissions, and regardless of the raw racism of the West, the

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[4] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn. 1973), 3-24, *passim*; Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York 1985), 3-80.

[5] Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 129-131.

frontier held experiential possibilities for African Americans that are revealed in their writings. Moreover, current historiographical trends illustrate that for African Americans the frontier concept had a broader meaning than the Turner thesis implied, broader even than that perceived by later historians who wrote specifically on the black West.

In 1902, Richard R. Wright, Jr., noted that the black presence and participation in the western experience began even before that of Anglo-Americans. Wright wrote a carefully documented article for the *American Anthropologist* on blacks who lived and labored in South America and New Spain one hundred years before Jamestown. His "Negro Companions of the Spanish Explorers" was ignored until 1969, when it finally was reprinted.[6] Furthermore, some blacks participating in the United States' westward migration documented first hand their experiences in frontier society. For example, James P. Beckwourth (1798-1866), Missouri-born explorer, trader, scout, and trapper, dictated an autobiography of his adventures and exploits. First published in 1856, his account was reissued in 1931 with a racist, bombastic introduction by cultural historian Bernard De Voto, who reduced Beckwourth's account to mere legend. Yet eyewitnesses to Beckwourth's ventures insisted that he was "the most famous Indian fighter of his generation." Beckwourth also found the first successful pass (which still bears his name) through the Sierra Nevadas to the Sacramento Valley gold fields. Self-trained frontier historian Francis Parkman thought Beckwourth "a fellow of bad character—a compound of white and black blood," and considered his narrative "false." Undoubtedly Parkman could not countenance an African American performing the deeds attributed to Beckwourth, whose courage and audacity astonished even Native Americans. Had he been white, Beckwourth would appear in textbooks as a western archetypical hero—one who helped define the "national character." Most western heroes from Daniel Boone to Kit Carson and Wyatt Earp imbibe legend and quasi-mythology yet still become part of our history. But Beckwourth was worse than "other." He was of mixed racial ancestry, and this relegated him to a "hybrid" status, which prompted Parkman to label Beckwourth a "bad" character.[7]

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[6] Richard R. Wright, "Negro Companions of the Spanish Explorers," in August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, eds., *The Making of Black America* (2 vols., New York 1969), I, 25-33.

[7] T. D. Bonner, ed., *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth, Mountaineer,*

James Williams, another transplanted black southerner, escaped Maryland slavery in 1838 at age thirteen. Williams worked with the underground railroad in Pennsylvania, kept a fruit stand, and fought slave catchers in Boston before sailing for San Francisco in 1853. Settling in Sacramento, the resourceful Walker engaged in various business enterprises, continued his abolitionist activities through the famous Sacramento court case of fugitive Archy Lee, and traveled from coast to coast several times. Williams's West was filled with runaways, their heroic allies, and slaveholders forever on their heels. Williams also commented on exclusionary measures passed against the Chinese, the poor treatment of local Indians, the establishment of black institutions, and African American participation in the gold fields. Unlike Beckwourth, Williams wrote and published his own narrative. Though a little known work, there seems to be little question about its authenticity. Williams offers vivid descriptions and insights into life in the West for African Americans.[8]

Black women such as Hanna Anderson Ropes, a Massachusetts woman who settled in Kansas in 1855, left accounts of their western experiences. Ropes, like most frontierwomen black or white, focused on home and family. For black frontierwomen, isolation and alienation from a community and from social functions exacerbated by racial barriers. Not all were primarily homemakers. Slave-born Biddy Mason walked from Mississippi to Missouri and then to San Bernardino with her three children. A nurse and midwife, "Grandmother Mason" was noted for works of charity and racial uplift. The first African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles was organized in her home. Mason became wealthy in California through real estate ventures and dictated a work of her life and times. Similarly, other black women kept diaries which today remain largely unexamined in various western state historical societies.[9] These and other primary

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Scout, and Pioneer, and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians (1856; rep., New York 1931); W. Sherman Savage, *Blacks in the West* (Westport, Conn. 1976), 71-74; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 3. For a discussion of attitudes toward mixed racial ancestry see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York 1971).

[8] James Williams, *Life and Adventures of James Williams, A Fugitive Slave, with a Full Description of the Underground Railroad* (San Francisco 1873).

[9] Glenda Riley, "American Daughters: Black Women in the West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 38 (Spring 1988), 14-27; Lawrence B. de Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," *Pacific Historical Review*, 49 (May 1980), 285-313; Savage, *Blacks in the West*, 14, 135.

sources still afford historians an opportunity write the African Americans' role into histories of the West.

It is important to remember, on this one-hundredth anniversary of his frontier thesis, that Frederick Jackson Turner's vision of the West has been democratized, at least partly pluralized, and greatly stripped of its mythology. Turner and his followers need not have looked far to uncover black participation in the frontier experience. Even during his own lifetime, Turner's exclusion of blacks quietly was being revised by African American historians.

In 1919, Delilah Beasley, a black amateur California historian wrote *Negro Trailblazers of California*. Although she lacked formal training, Beasley's approach was professional. She searched California records at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, examined the state archives in Sacramento, explored newspapers, land, hospital, and poor-farm records. She investigated assembly and senate journals, legal reports and state statutes. Although some of Beasley's historical judgments were problematic, her self-published book was sound enough for later scholars to rely upon.[10]

While progressive and consensus historians in white institutions ignored the black frontier experience, scholars publishing in the *Journal of Negro History, Negro History Bulletin*, and with Carter G. Woodson's Associated Publishers wrote prolifically about African American presence in the West. Beasley's 1918 article, "Slavery in California" documented important but little-known information about slavery in the American West. Additionally, Beasley was perhaps the first person to write on black women in the West. Kenneth Wiggins Porter's pioneering articles on black participation in fur trading, the Seminole Wars, black-Indian relations, and the trans-Mississippi black experience also were published in the *Journal of Negro History* over a period of several decades. In 1971 a collection of Porter's most important articles was published in one volume. His contribution to the scholarship about blacks in the West remains unmatched. Porter was not only informative but analytical and critical in his approach to the frontier experience. W. Sherman Savage, whose remarkable academic career spanned nearly fifty years, also researched extensively on the black frontier experience. Like Porter, most of Savage's work was published in the *Journal of Negro History* and he too lived to see his scholarship recognized by the historical profession. In 1976 Savage published *Blacks in the West*, a culmination of decades of research that included

[10] Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (Los Angeles, 1919).

significant information on African American women in the West.[11]

Prior to the Civil Rights era, few historians outside the small orbit of African American scholars noted that the frontier experience was a factor in African American life and history. And it is unfortunate that scholars of the West like Porter and Savage remained in relative obscurity until white historians revived and gave credibility to the subject. These earlier scholars were pioneers in the truest sense, laboring in selfless isolation and experiencing ostracism from the established profession. The latecomers, while expanding on earlier studies, also relied heavily on previous groundbreaking scholarship. General recognition of the black frontier experience as an integral part of the American past was a product of the 1960s and 1970s. Books such as *The Negro Cowboys* by Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones, *The Buffalo Soldiers* by William H. Leckie, and *The Black West* by William Loren Katz, presented full treatments of the frontier from a black perspective. Despite the somewhat superficial and popular orientation of these works, they began a new historiography and synthetic treatment among scholars who had previously ignored the black West. Rudolph Lapp's study on blacks in gold rush California and Monroe Billington's work on New Mexico's buffalo soldiers offer specialized treatments of black participation in specific areas of western development and enhance our knowledge of the collective experience of blacks in the frontier.[12]

Perhaps even more significant are works such as Juliet E. K. Walker's *Free Frank* that offer an individual, in-depth, and diverse presentation of the frontier experience of African Americans. Land speculators, entrepreneurs, ranchers, and other settlers were central to Turner's West, that he maintained spread "democracy," "republican government," and "community." Walker's *Free Frank* chronicles just such an experience. Free Frank (1777-1854) was active in three successive westward movements between the American Revolution and the Civil War. This slave-born African American was a product of the South Carolina piedmont frontier. He moved to the Kentucky

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[11] Delilah L. Beasley, "Slavery in California," *Journal of Negro History*, 3 (Jan. 1918), 33-44; Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York 1971); Savage, *Blacks in the West*, *passim*.

[12] Durham and Jones, *The Negro Cowboys* (New York 1965); Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers, A Narrative of the Negro Calvary in the West* (Norman, Okla. 1967); Katz, *The Black West* (1971; 2nd ed., Garden City, N.Y. 1973); Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven 1977); Billington, *New Mexico's Buffalo Soldiers, 1866-1900* (Niwot, Colo. 1991).

Pennyroyal frontier, purchased his wife's and his own freedom, and speculated in frontier land. In 1830 Free Frank joined the westward movement and settled in Pike County, Illinois, establishing in 1836 the town of New Philadelphia. He remained there and continued attempting to purchase relatives until his death in 1854.[13]

The founding of New Philadelphia by this free black pioneer was a response to the internal improvement boom created by construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and apparently not motivated by racial separatism. But Walker believes that Free Frank's entrepreneurial activities also captured the mood of antebellum African Americans who reacted to the American Colonization Society's movement, the socioeconomic plight of urban blacks, and to virulent racism. Blacks such as Martin Delaney and Reverend Lewis Woodson proposed that instead of Africa, African Americans take advantage of land opportunities in the West through either individual farmsteads or colonies of farmers.[14]

Free Frank was not the only black to establish an antebellum town. But according to Walker, although undoubtedly sensitive to race issues, the black proprietor's town was integrated and became part of Pike County's plans for developing a community. By 1850 New Philadelphia had become an established agricultural center with a "wheelwright, cabinet-making, and two shoemaking shops, the blacksmith shop, a general store, a stagecoach stand, and a post office." It was, in short, a typical and flourishing frontier market town.[15]

New Philadelphia and its founder offer a collective perspective on how the American western towns were shaped and their significance in the development of Illinois from a frontier state to a major industrial and agricultural center. As Walker notes, Free Frank, "a man of uncommon drive and determination, would have had historical significance, even had he not been black and formerly slave."[16] Frank's impressive achievements, and those of other black pioneers in the West, not only belie Turner's "whites only" approach to frontier settlement, but reveal how blacks challenged racism, exclusionary "black codes," and discriminatory land-claiming practices.

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[13] Walker, *Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier* (Lexington, Ky. 1983), 1-6, 49-99, 154-160.

[14] *Ibid.*, 112-118, 154-155; Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York 1981), 130-131.

[15] Walker, *Free Frank*, 145-146.

[16] *Ibid.*

Other towns, almost exclusively black, emerged in antebellum America and thereafter. They were, as Kenneth M. Hamilton observed, "an integral part of the frontier urban settlement process"—neither insignificant nor exceptional. Hamilton also maintained that black and white men establishing black towns such as New Philadelphia in Illinois, Nicodemus in Kansas, Mound Bayou in Mississippi, and Langston City in Oklahoma were driven by speculation and profit rather than by racial tensions.[17] But notwithstanding the motivations of speculators and others promoting black towns, settlers and their supporters had a different agenda. In most cases, black pioneers who settled these communities expressed a sense of nationalism and a desire to uplift themselves without the constraints of racism.

Yet, the frontier as a wellspring of democracy and a safety valve in a Turnanian sense did not apply to African Americans. If the West sometimes muted class status or caste, race-consciousness rarely abated—although in instances where the black population was small, and hence not threatening, as in Pike County, Illinois—African Americans might coexist with whites in relative peace. For Free Frank, the Illinois frontier provided a mechanism for economic opportunity that allowed him to secure a position of respect in Pike County and to begin the process of freeing his large family. And some free people of color found the West preferable to the East where racial exclusion was entrenched, and certainly to the South where they were little better off than slaves.

For African Americans, the frontier could provide an easing of racial tensions if not a true safety valve. The unsettling, undeveloped, solitary aspects of frontier existence appealed to a people who felt at bay because of slavery and racism. Hence African Americans established all-black towns, settled in sparsely populated regions of the West, lived among Indians, and established communities of slaves on the frontier. For African Americans, the frontier could mean autonomy and liberation, not because of the presence of American democracy, institutions, and civilization, but precisely because of their absence. Thus in an entirely different sense than Turner intended, the frontier, while not a safety valve, could be a metaphor for freedom for African Americans.

Peter H. Wood's *Black Majority*, a study of early Carolina, suggested a frontier theme for African Americans that scholars have ad-

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[17] Kenneth Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana 1991) 1-4, 152. For a different perspective, see Norman L. Crockett, *The Black Towns* (Lawrence, Kans. 1979).

dressed and expanded. Wood depicted the outpost colony of Carolina as a society where minimal social barriers existed prior to the successful widespread introduction of rice culture. Originally, external dangers, a diverse economy, and mutual dependence helped to provide a measure of autonomy for Africans in early Carolina. However, the large slave importations necessary for developing rice cultivation coupled with black assertion led to mounting white anxiety, creating a more firmly entrenched bondage system and repressive slave codes. As the South Carolina frontier was transformed into a settled region, black autonomy and initiative was stifled.[18]

Wood's implicit thesis involving the relationship of frontier conditions to black autonomy and liberation is an important frame of reference for two important new studies. As early as 1848 and 1858, writers had noted black presence in the Gulf of Mexico region and their alliance with the Seminoles. Daniel Usner's *Settlers, Indians and Slaves in a Frontier Economy* demonstrates how economics of the frontier encouraged "a network of cross-cultural interaction" and how slaves figured prominently in the Louisiana frontier as soldiers, traders, boatmen, artisans, interpreters, hunters, herders, and peddlers. Their open economic exchange, conducted with settlers and Indians, was viewed with anxiety because the activity encouraged black initiative and rebelliousness. The lower Mississippi Valley frontier afforded mechanisms for slave defiance, as African Americans took advantage of white dependency and shifting political and territorial boundaries. Black participation in a frontier economy continued through the 1760s. By then Spain and Britain, in order to consolidate political control of Louisiana and West Florida, enhanced economic productivity and promoted immigration of whites and slaves. These measures, as well as hostility from some Indian groups, checked black autonomy, and the frontier economy was replaced by cotton culture.[19]

Gwendolyn Hall's work on colonial Louisiana further demonstrates how the unsettling aspects of frontier existence could be liberating for African Americans. Hall depicts frontier interactions as a melange of white, black, and Indian clashes over independence, hegemony, and freedom. Indian resistance to land encroachments and African resistance to bondage placed colonial Louisiana on a precari-

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[18] Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York 1974), 95-130, 195-297.

[19] Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill 1992), 81, 107-108, 278-280, 282-284.

ous footing. Black and Indian encounters intensified the problems facing French and later Spanish settlers trying to turn a profit. Occasional black-Indian alliance greatly alarmed the white settlers. As one official noted, "the greatest misfortune which could befall the colony and which would inevitably lead to its total loss would be the union between the Indian nations and the black slaves." Great pains were taken to encourage animosity between these two oppressed groups.[20]

More than solidarity with Indians, whose alliances vacillated, Africans viewed the uncharted frontier itself as a means to gain their freedom. Cypress swamps, woodlands, and waterways beyond the property lines of settlers became safe refuges for black fugitives. Africans moved skillfully along the waterways and set up their own "maroon" communities in the cypress swamps. According to Hall, "a network of cabins of runaway slaves arose behind plantations along the rivers and bayous. Arms and ammunition were stored in the cabins." Moreover, Louisiana marronage was a well-developed enterprise whose economic sustenance depended upon production and trade carried on illegally with white settlers. Maroons "cultivated crops, made articles of willow and reeds, hunted, fished, and frequented New Orleans to trade and gamble."[21]

These frontier maroon communities were organized in families. Hall finds that by 1780 the Louisiana frontier was dotted with maroon settlements. They surrounded the plantations and asserted control over strategically vital parts of Louisiana between the Mississippi River and New Orleans. Maroons were armed, had strong leadership, and maintained a frontier economy. Although these communities eventually declined with the passing of the frontier, Hall maintains that poor Louisiana whites owe their language and some cultural adaptations to the runaway slaves whose vernacular and economy they borrowed in the isolated countryside.[22]

One need not look only to Frederick Jackson Turner for analyses of the frontier meaning. No one knew more than blacks, what it meant to live on the margins of society, and often they preferred it that way. From the perspective of metaphor, the meaning of the frontier for African Americans goes beyond Turner's constricting inter-

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[20] Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge 1992), 97-103.

[21] *Ibid.*, 202-203.

[22] *Ibid.*, 236.

pretation. Fugitive slaves—Free Frank, John Brown, Martin Delaney, and John Mercer Langston—are only a few who realized the importance of a frontier, of movement and expansionism in addressing black self-determination. For African American history, Turner's thesis is significant not only because he provided a challenge to his generation of black historians, but also because his historical blind spot encouraged future scholars of the black experience to employ Turner's own guidelines to reveal the flaws in his perspectives and go beyond his narrow parameters in defining the meaning of the frontier.

Grasping for the Significance of the Turner Legacy: An Afterword

John Lauritz Larson

For one hundred years American historians have been writing under the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, and if the force and character of Turner's legacy has changed over time, these centennial essays demonstrate Turner's enduring capacity to engage serious writers who dare to interpret American history. A century ago, in a hot Chicago lecture room, to an audience apparently unaware of its historic good fortune, Turner sketched out a conceptual framework and laid down interpretive challenges that have inspired, constrained, or bedeviled historians of the United States like no other single piece of scholarship. If Turner's disciples never succeeded in proving the master's many speculations, a legion of critics has yet to escape completely the terms of Turner's formulations. Historians shrink from declaring anything unique, but Turner's frontier thesis stands alone among a century's production of books, essays, and monographic studies all striving, in Turner's words, to "explain American development."[1]

John Lauritz Larson, Associate Professor of History, Purdue University, is the author of *Bonds of Enterprise: John Murray Forbes and Western Development in America's Railway Age* (1984) and numerous articles on internal improvement and the West.

[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Ray Allen Billington (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1961), 37.

Turner acquired such enduring influence—and attracted such violent criticism—precisely because he attempted to say in bold, clear terms what he believed made America great, progressive, unique. An ardent professional, one of the first generation to elevate historical scholarship in America to the status of a learned profession, Turner nevertheless published sweeping, poetic "verses" that captured the imagination of amateur readers and dazzled incautious popular commentators on the American story. Three of Turner's most important essays proclaimed the "significance" of history, sections, and the frontier to American life and letters, proclaimed it in terms so forceful and confident as to make most academics, then and now, cringe. Writing at the height of the Progressive Era, with America's "triumphant" nineteenth century just past and its postmodern malaise still a generation ahead, Turner drew celebratory conclusions and wrote toward an optimistic future. Given this almost unseemly eagerness to explain grand developments to a casual (careless?) public, Turner inevitably drew fire from his own professional colleagues who embraced criticism as either a means or an end of historical research.[2]

Many of Turner's critics, who since his death in 1932 have multiplied in all directions, objected primarily to what the frontier thesis said about the American past. Early doubters such as Benjamin F. Wright, Jr., George Wilson Pierson, and Fred A. Shannon held the frontier thesis up to detailed factual scrutiny and found it insupportable in the face of the evidence. Frontier democracies proved less unique, European and Atlantic contributions seemed more compelling, and the famous "safety valve" of "free land" arguably let off little or no steam in American labor markets throughout the nineteenth century.[3] Turner's supporters—Frederick L. Paxson, John D.

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[2] A similar theme of significance is developed in William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 28 (Apr. 1987), 164, and more fully in Cronon, "Turner's First Stand: The Significance of Significance in American History," in *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque 1991), 73-101.

[3] See Benjamin F. Wright, Jr., "Political Institutions and the Frontier," in *Sources of Culture in the Middle West*, ed. Dixon Ryan Fox (New York 1934), 15-38; Wright, "American Democracy and the Frontier," *Yale Review*, 20 (Dec. 1930), 349-365; George Wilson Pierson, "The Frontier and Frontiersmen of Turner's Essays: A Scrutiny of the Foundations of the Middle Western Tradition," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 64 (Oct. 1940), 449-478; Pierson, "The Frontier and American Institutions: A Criticism of the Turner Theory," *New England Quarterly*, 15 (June 1942), 224-255; Fred A. Shannon, "A Post-Mortem on the Labor-Safety-Valve

Figure 6. Turner in Retirement.

Source: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Barnhart, Ray Allen Billington, and many others—rushed in to stem the tide of criticism with sandbags of proof and qualification, with the result that for nearly fifty years a lively academic industry was guided by the Turner agenda.

Former Turner students such as Avery Craven defended their mentor as a meticulous and generous historian while they readily conceded and forgave the many excesses of his proclamations.[4] Walter Prescott Webb (himself the victim of a nasty attack by Fred Shannon) refashioned the frontier thesis on a global scale, with no less controversial results.[5] After relaxing claims for novelty and the safety valve, and allowing "the most sweeping of concessions" to the critics, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick found both life and vigor in Turner's association of the frontier with American democracy.[6] Merle Curti crafted an exceptional case study of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, producing evidence that sustained but often significantly reformed Turner's essential claims.[7] For a generation, researchers weighed in with evidence alternately condemning, affirming, and modifying Turner's argument.

Some Turner critics, however, seemed driven more by what the frontier thesis implied about the present or the future than by what it actually said about the past, and from this quarter came the most acrimonious and intemperate exchanges. In 1933, Louis M. Hacker reviewed in the *Nation* a collection of Turner's essays, *The Significance of Sections in American History*, denouncing the frontier historian and his disciples as "fabricators of a tradition" that was "not only fictitious" but "positively harmful" to American society. Hacker claimed that Turner's "perverted" stress on uniqueness and pioneer life concealed the true course of capitalist development, class struggle, and imperialism, leaving Americans in the twentieth century with a dangerously

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Theory," *Agricultural History*, 19 (Jan. 1945), 31-37. These and many other useful pieces are reproduced in *The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History?* ed. Ray Allen Billington (New York 1966); and *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, ed. George Rogers Taylor (rev. ed., Boston 1956).

[4] See Avery Craven, "Frederick Jackson Turner," in Taylor, *The Turner Thesis*, 76-86.

[5] See Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Austin 1951).

[6] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest," and "Part II: The Southwest Frontier and New England," *Political Science Review*, 69 (Sept. 1954), 321-353, and (Dec. 1954), 565-602, quotation at 324.

[7] Merle Curti, *The Making of an American Community; a Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (Stanford 1959).

fanciful self-image. Angrily, Hacker dismissed Turner's writings as naive and ignorant—and (implicitly) if not these, then dishonest![8]

In his 1945 presidential address to the American Historical Association, Columbia's Carlton J. H. Hayes reflected acidly on American indifference to international affairs and blamed Turner's breezy provincialism for fostering a self-righteous exceptionalism tending to sustain "messianic" impulses which, "if unattended by realistic knowledge of other peoples and their historic cultures," could lead to "the most dangerous consequences for the United States itself."[9] A few years later, Richard Hofstadter expanded this critique of Turner's role in feeding Americans fantastic myths and wicked falsehoods about their own past.[10] Finally in 1965, just as a critical revolt against messianic impulses swept American universities, David Noble characterized Turner as the second in a dynasty of myth-making "Historians Against History," who served not as scholars but as priests tending the precepts of an American civil religion.[11]

If the angry tone of such detractors as Hacker, Hayes, and Noble seems unmeasured, their charge against historians' fabrications should not be dismissed lightly. Turner's essay style begged for popular recognition, and his frequent reiteration of sweeping conclusions, even when new evidence clouded the issues, left him open to charges of encouraging the misappropriation of his scholarship by a self-serving popular culture. Left-wing scholars in particular felt ideologically excluded by the breadth and force of Turner's legacy; and whether or not Turner intended to encourage the translation of his original "Progressivism" into "American exceptionalism" or "consensus liberalism," the fact remains that commentators sated with Turnerian myths experienced little appetite for alternative critical fare. Within the academy, Turner's stock plummeted; in the same way that his original assault on Herbert Baxter Adams's "Anglo-Saxon" myths had once stimulated a flood of exciting new scholarship, the disestablishment of Turnerian orthodoxy in the middle decades of the twenti-

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[8] Louis M. Hacker, "Sections—or Classes?" reprinted in Taylor, *Turner Thesis*, 43-46, quotations at 43 and 45.

[9] Carlton J. H. Hayes, "The American Frontier—Frontier of What?" *American Historical Review*, 51 (Jan. 1946), 199-216, quotation at 203.

[10] Richard Hofstadter, "Turner and the Frontier Myth," *The American Scholar*, 18 (Autumn 1949), reprinted in Billington, *Frontier Thesis*, 100-106; also Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York 1968), 47-168.

[11] David W. Noble, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing since 1830* (Minneapolis 1965), 37-55.

eth century refreshed historical research and reinvigorated dissenting voices. Turner's critics, however, proved less successful at capturing public attention and establishing the significance of their revisions, so that reinterpretations of the frontier tradition have not purged Turner's errors from the popular imagination.

That such angry, strident voices have lashed out at a quiet-mannered colleague, long dead, who in life apparently suffered more writer's block than fame or public influence, reminds us that historians engage in a serious business with consequences that can overwhelm the academic personality. Stories from the past invariably help a people understand who they are, how they came to be that way, and perhaps where they might be heading in the future. In a self-created society such as the United States, the significance of history can be doubly important. First, the original act of self-creation implies a rip in the fabric of history, an invitation to Americans to recompose their narratives without reference to the burdens of tradition and memory that defined Old World life. Second, a self-governing people, once accustomed to fashioning their stories to suit their present inclinations, are easily addicted to reimagining their creation myths instead of learning from experience. False histories, in other words, are dangerous; and false histories that gain wide acceptance by faithful followers encourage genuine mischief in the real world.

Once called the "objectivity question" by scholars still imbued with a hope of getting it right, the underlying quest for truth in history that lent such an edge to Turner's harsher critics now has melted into postmodern doubts about the veracity of evidence, the authority of text, and the possibility of writing history apart from myth. Nevertheless, professional historians still reach for significance in their accounts of America's past in order to understand both its factual and mythic force. Perhaps our recent cynicism itself has rekindled sympathy for Turnerian claims that seem essentially "true" even if demonstrably "false"; still, the difference between myth and history commands historians' critical attention if scholars' voices are not to be rendered wholly irrelevant.[12]

The most recent histories with Turnerian roots suggest that this effort to distinguish myth from history still motivates the work of professional historians. John Mack Faragher, in a new Illinois community study, scrutinizes not the Turnerian majority who slashed

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[12] See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: the "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass. 1988).

through the frontier but the remnant third of the population who stayed, gathered kinfolk in neighborhoods, and built enduring communities. Their efforts—the antithesis of Turner's rugged atomistic individualism—nevertheless contributed another "really American part of our history."[13] Drew Cayton and Peter Onuf, in a recent historiographical review, locate Turner's lasting significance in his ability to "fashion a particular story of the past that captured the imagination" of midwestern middle-class Americans, and they challenge new historians not to denigrate Turner but to follow him and tell "our own story."[14] Patricia Nelson Limerick, one of the "new western historians," begins precisely such an effort in *The Legacy of Conquest*, replacing the awkward story of a frontier that closed in 1893 (before most western history took place) with a saga of continuous exploitation that transform's Turner's pioneer virtues—individualism, self-confidence, conquest, and innovation—into engines of unprecedented destruction.[15] There is no mistaking, in these very different new works on Turnerian questions, that significance is something worth fighting for.

The new essays that have been presented in this symposium continue and extend this tradition of scrutinizing Turner's challenging thesis and its influence in the study of American life and history. Eight scholars in fields of current interest and enduring interpretive importance were invited to reflect on the impact of the Turner legacy on their own special areas of research. The result is an exciting collection of new perspectives. Asked to introduce the Turner "shadow" from the vantage point of long experience, Martin Ridge has identified a conceptual affinity between Turner's broad-gauge environmentalism and the extraordinarily influential "Annales" school of French social history—a link that perhaps says something about the ancestry of the Annalists while it explains the echoes of familiarity many American historians encountered in reading Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean*. Lacy K. Ford, Jr., like Elkins and McKitrick before him, found much to recommend Turner's portrait of frontier democracy and social fluidity, even if it led him more directly to the sectional crisis and the Civil War. Geographers Carville Earle and

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[13] John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, Conn. 1986), 52.

[14] Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington, Ind. 1990), quotation at 126.

[15] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York 1987).

Changyong Cao, on the other hand, stood Turner's thesis on its head, using environmental arguments to demonstrate that in 1893 the consequences Turner feared would follow the closing of the frontier already had governed American development for fifty years.

Veteran student of "free land" and the trans-Appalachian frontier, Malcolm Rohrbough challenged the impact of the closing frontier from a different direction: why did not Turner take any notice of events in his own lifetime that seem to demonstrate how the midwestern pioneer story did not work in the arid regions of the Far West or in a mature industrial economy? Mary E. Young reviewed the stories of "middle ground" cultures shared by natives and intruders, whose significance Turner early predicted but whose intricate details he never imagined. John B. Boles explained how Turner's emphasis on frontier democracy inadvertently focused attention on American religion, a topic Turner himself dismissed rather too casually. Glenda Riley asked where were the ladies in Turner's history, considering the fact that there were plenty of women in Turner's sources, in his private life, and in his famous history seminars. Finally, Margaret Washington wrote into the American frontier story African Americans who Turner, in his racism, did not see but who nevertheless sometimes found courage, opportunity, and freedom on the frontier and who have since refashioned his enthusiasm for an exclusive, white democracy into a passion for an inclusive, multicultural, democratic society.

At one hundred years, then, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" stands secure among American historical writings as the source of some of our most original, most fruitful, most controversial, and most enduring scholarly debates. Four generations of historians have found themselves practically incapable of writing without some reference to the frontier thesis. Historians of the early republic acknowledge an especially important debt to Turner because our period was his period, our frontier the only frontier on which Turner's thesis ever bore any resemblance to historical reality. Yet in all kinds of fields, even as the profession grows bewilderingly large and complicated, with new voices, perspectives, methologies, conceptualizations, and narrative strategies multiplying every year, Turner's legacy continues to stimulate reiteration, refutation, and recognition. It cannot be because he "got it right": too many solid studies reveal serious flaws in the substance of Turner's history. It cannot be because he asked the only important questions: too many extraordinary works have raised different, critical, story-shaping issues unrelated to free land and the pioneers. It must be because Turner's wild, sweeping,

reckless vision, grasping for a key to "explain American development," set a goal, laid down an objective that historians still find worth pursuing—to explain the significance of things gone by, that we might understand what has come to pass.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

This issue is special in different ways. For perhaps the first time ever, we have completed the editorial work on an issue before the previous issue has been printed, bound, stuffed (into mailers), labeled, and shipped off to the post office dock for distribution. Unfortunately this singular event does not mean we are far ahead of our customary schedule; rather, it means the previous issue, for reasons not yet clear, has been delayed several days at some point between printing and shipping. Our apologies to all for the later-than-usual arrival of the spring issue; we will try to make up for it by having this special Frederick Jackson Turner Centennial issue to you on time, which means sometime in July (for those within range of the United States Postal Service). Indeed, we are hoping to have this issue in your hands before the forthcoming SHEAR conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, that begins on the 22nd, one aspect of which will be a session devoted to the topic of this issue and featuring a number of our distinguished colleagues who contributed to these pages.

We owe a large debt of gratitude to Professor John Lauritz Larson for his labors in conceptualizing the Turner Symposium, and then—we all know how these things work—for failing to duck quickly enough as we searched for someone to do the work in bringing it to a successful conclusion. John performed exceedingly well, and so far as I know all but one (for reasons of personal illness) of his first choices for doing essays for us not only agreed to do so but also got them in on time. We are also particularly grateful to John P. Kaminski of Madison House and the department of history at the University of Wisconsin for his yeoman work in obtaining the half-dozen photographs from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin that grace this issue.

NEW ENGLAND CREATURES, 1400-1900

The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife in conjunction with Boston University's Program in American and New England Studies, Historic Deerfield, and Plymouth Plantation have announced a conference on "New England Creatures, 1400-1900," for August 6-8, 1993, at Eaglebrook School in Deerfield, Massachusetts. The three-day conference will address the subject of farm animals, wildlife, do-

JOURNAL OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC, 13 (Summer 1993). © 1993 Society for Historians of the Early American Republic.

mestic pets, and animal lore in New England and its adjacent regions. The program will include first-person interpretations of husbandry practices in nineteenth-century central Massachusetts. For further information contact Peter Benes, Editor and Director, The Dublin Seminar, 249 Harrington Avenue, Concord, Massachusetts 07142; the telephone number is (508) 369-7382.

AAS NAMES 1993-1994 FELLOWS

Sixteen junior and senior scholars have been awarded fellowships to work in the field of American history and culture through 1876 at the library of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, during 1993-1994. Three of the fellowships awarded, funded by a grant to AAS from the National Endowment for the Humanities, provide for six to twelve months of research at the society. The other thirteen awards, variously funded, support one to three months' research at the society. The list of the current AAS Fellows (and research topics) include the following:

Bruce Laurie, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "The Search for Security in Nineteenth-Century America";

Michael Winship, University of Texas, Austin, "The American Book in the Industrial Era";

Martha Burns, Brown University, "A Piano in the Parlor: Music and Gentility in America, 1760-1860";

Katherine A. Chavigny, University of Chicago, "American Confessions: The Formation of Antebellum Addiction Narratives";

and Scott A. Sandage, Rutgers University, "Deadbeats, Drunkards, and Dreamers: The Problem of Failure in Nineteenth-Century America."

EDITORIAL BOARD CHANGES

With this issue we welcome six new members of the board of editors: Andrew R. L. Cayton, Miami University; Paul A. Gilje, University of Oklahoma; Donald R. Hickey, Wayne State College; Marc W. Kruman, Wayne State University; Jane H. Pease, Charleston, South Carolina; and Anne C. Rose, Penn State University. The welcome is, in fact, one issue late in that the new board members began their four-year terms with Volume 13. At the same time we want to offer our belated thanks to the six retiring members of the board: John Lauritz Larson, Purdue University; Jean Matthews, University of Western Ontario; Gail Fowler Mohanty, Newton, Massachusetts; Steven J. Ross, University of

Southern California, University Park; James Roger Sharp, Syracuse University; and C. Edward Skeen, Memphis State University. Each has given unfailing service upon request, and will probably be called upon many more times in the future. Certainly the journal is the better for having had the benefit of their counsel over the past few years.

IRISH-AMERICAN STUDIES GRANTS

Grants ranging from $1,00 to $5,000 for scholars of all disciplines whose work examines the Irish-American experience are available from the Irish American Cultural Institute, an educational foundation in Minnesota. The next deadline for proposals is August 16, 1993. For further information call or write the Irish American Cultural Institute, 2115 Summit Avenue, No. 5026, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105; the telephone number is (612) 962-6040. Proposals treating the Irish in the Midwest or New York are especially encouraged.

PLAN AHEAD

The 1994 conference of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic will be hosted by Boston College in July. No details concerning the program committee or local arrangements are available now, but why not plan now to follow this year's visit to the University of North Carolina with a visit next year to Boston College? Further information, as soon as it is available, may be obtained from the executive secretary of SHEAR, Professor James H. Broussard, Department of History, Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pennsylvania 17003

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by James C. Bradford

A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1: ***From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891***. By Marion B. Lucas. (Frankfort: The Kentucky Historical Society, 1992. Pp. xxii, 430. Tables, illustrations. $29.95.)

African Americans have occupied an important place in Kentucky history from the earliest exploration to the present century. Slaves accompanied Daniel Boone to Kentucky on his first exploratory trip and the black population continued to grow until it reached a peak of 24.7 percent in 1830. Lucas points out that Kentucky laws barred the importation of slaves into the state after 1833, thus playing a part in checking the growth of black population. Another factor that checked this growth was the sale of slaves to the Lower South. Lucas considers the issue of slave "breeding" for the southern market to be one of the most controversial questions of the slave system. Although Lucas concludes that the evidence of slave breeding is sparse, he tends to agree with Frederic Bancroft and Kenneth Stampp that excessive numbers "of the natural increase of . . . bondsmen" were sold southward (20).

Lucas informs the reader that the purpose of his book is to narrate "how blacks sought to share in the world they helped create and of their successes and failures. It is a story of struggle against overwhelming odds and of the human spirit" (xxii). He traces living conditions, labor, religion, education, and family life of black Americans through the nineteenth century. Some readers will regret that more independent treatment was not given to female African Americans. He observes that slaves fared better under Kentucky's slave system as compared to that of the Deep South, but hastens to state that this fact "does not exonerate the evil of both systems" (43).

Lucas points out that the Kentucky Colonization Society was one of the most significant branches of the society in the country. It is unfortunate that he did not deal with the attitude and place of Kentucky blacks concerning the organization since the records and correspondence are on microfilm.

In the period after the Civil War, the author has chapters on religion, education, living conditions, and the struggle for civil rights. The chapter on civil rights and politics is the best chapter in the book, but the chapter on post-Civil War education will probably be the most re-

vealing to most readers. Lucas gives due credit to the importance of the Freedmen's Bureau, the black churches, John G. Fee, and Gabriel Burdette in the development of black education in Kentucky. Lucas's sources were not reliable when he called E. Belle Mitchell "a well qualified teacher." It is true that she had some formal schooling, but John Fee's main purpose in recruiting her as a teacher was to establish a bit of integration in the faculty at Camp Nelson. In the beginning his intention was to have Mitchell trained by other teachers along with a limited amount of practice teaching.

Lucas analyzes the growth of property ownership of African Americans in Kentucky after the Civil War. Although his treatment is limited primarily to Louisville, Lexington, Camp Nelson, and Berea, his conclusions are accurate for the whole state. "Acquisition of property by blacks, though minuscule when compared to that of whites," Lucas concludes, "was impressive" (277). The author could have made his treatment more revealing if he had compared Kentucky with other former slave states. Loren Schweninger, in a statistical study, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (1990), found that the number of black real estate owners increased more in post-Civil War Kentucky than in any other former slave state in the decades after the Civil War.

The author has made good use of all the books written by fugitive slaves from Kentucky, the WPA Slave Narratives, manuscript family papers, church records, and the Freedmen's Bureau records. Newspapers were drawn on as an important source, including the antislavery, secular, and sectarian press. Lucas researched in the significant (but difficult to secure permission to use) newspaper of the African Methodist Church, the *Christian Recorder*. He made more use of this journal than has any other historian.

Thanks to the Kentucky legislature, Marion Lucas and George Wright have been able to produce in a two-volume study, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, the most complete narrative of Afro-American history of any southern state.

Morehead State University Victor B. Howard

Patriarch: George Washington and the New American Nation. By Richard Norton Smith. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1993. Pp. xxi, 424. $24.95.)

Thanks, Mr. President: The Trail-Blazing Second Term of George Washington. By North Callahan. (New York: Cornwall Books, 1991. Pp. 255. $19.95.)

With nearly 4,000 books already published about the life of George Washington, a new one must offer something different and worthwhile.

Next to the need for an authoritative biography of Washington's mother (a call first expressed by Douglas Southall Freeman in 1948 and still unmet), the political leadership of George Washington has long needed examination and analysis. In 1985 Paul Longmore stated that "scholars, particularly Washington biographers, have never adequately analyzed him as a politician and political leader." And in 1988 John E. Ferling wrote that "the recent slender volume by Forrest McDonald, *The Presidency of George Washington* (1974), is the only one-volume assessment of his presidency."

Although a few one-volume efforts have appeared since 1988, *Patriarch* is a major, substantial contribution to fill a glaring gap. This book concentrates on George Washington's eight years as our nation's first president, years in which he proved himself to be an outstandingly remarkable politician.

Smith, whose previous works include a biography of Herbert Hoover and one of Thomas E. Dewey, defines his current book as "The story of George Washington under political, not military, siege" (xi). He concludes by pointing out that Congressman Fisher Ames in a eulogy at Washington's death in 1799 made the perceptive assertion that George Washington had "changed mankind's ideas of political greatness." And Smith clearly agrees that Washington was "a better politician than soldier" (359).

Washington himself had said that as president of the United States he "walked on untrodden ground." And he added, rightfully so, that "there is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent." *Patriarch* takes the reader along the politically dangerous path the first president walked. After all, Vice President John Adams had to cast the deciding vote to break congressional tie votes an all-time record 29 times. It took a skilled individual to avoid such heated political battles and come out with his leadership intact, and himself respected. Washington accomplished both objectives.

Typical biographies of George Washington devote less than 30 percent of their pages to his eight years as the leader of a new nation's new federal government. The heavy emphasis, usually 60 percent or more, is on his eight military years during the War for Independence. It is refreshing to have a new, focused study of his civil leadership role. Many, many readers of *Patriarch* will meet an unknown, unexpected Washington. His adroit handling of the vicious Jefferson-Hamilton policy battles is a prime example that is carefully, fully, and entertainingly recounted by Smith. Also well developed in *Patriarch* is how Washington formulated foreign policy for the new nation, amid

tremendous and dangerous pressures both domestic and overseas. And in *Patriarch* our eyes are opened to the ways in which Washington dealt with the media of his day. His defusing of bombshell-type newspaper articles that were ghost-written by major politicians is Smith at his best.

He does not pay much attention to the precedents that Washington was setting for all his successor presidents. Nor does Smith give more than short shrift to Washington's presidential speeches and proposals for the legislative agenda in Congress. These two omissions detract somewhat from an otherwise thoughtful, comprehensive, responsible account of the workings of the executive branch in our nation's capital cities of New York and Philadelphia in the 1790s.

North Callahan's book nicely complements Smith's. In his preface Callahan says that his book is "for the general reader to bring into focus a new viewpoint on the significant events of 1793-1797" (13). But more than for the general reader, this erudite book should appeal to professors of early American history and to Washington scholars. The book does present a new viewpoint that is a worthwhile addition to prior analyses of the second term of the first presidency. This is an informative and thought-provoking book mainly for those readers who already have an in-depth knowledge of the man and the period.

Callahan concentrates on Washington's second administration because "that was when he was impelled to set precedents which underpin our national government" (15). Those precedents are identified throughout the book, many of which "are followed even today" (217). And that makes this book a significant contribution to published work about the period.

Two aspects detract from this book. The first is Callahan's determination to "answer some of the pusillanimous trash recently published in rapacious attempts to smear Washington" (13). One wonders about the objectivity in a book with this stated purpose. The second is Callahan's excessive coverage of Washington's religion. Many pages, especially 65 through 72, are devoted to his religious development and experiences during years prior to 1793. Despite Callahan's assertion that he has "researched and presented in what is believed to be extraordinary depth [Washington's] devoutly religious side . . . " (13), he failed to show that this coverage was relevant or necessary in a book about the second term of his presidency.

Particularly strong points about *Thanks, Mr. President* are the chapters covering the visit of France's Edmund Genet, the Whiskey Rebellion, the Jay Treaty, and the advent of political parties. Also

well presented are insightful discussions of Washington's relationships with Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Knox, and Edmund Randolph.

This book presents a new interpretation of the legacy from our first president. Overall, it does so effectively and interestingly.

Waldwick, New Jersey George W. Nordham

Life After Death: Widows in Pennsylvania, 1750-1850. By Lisa Wilson. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. Pp. xi, 215. Tables. $34.95.)

In *Life After Death*, Lisa Wilson expands our understanding of widowhood in the early republic, offering some important insights into issues of property rights, family history, and women's changing roles. Wilson focuses on widowed women in early southeastern Pennsylvania, an area well studied by others interested in similar questions. *Life After Death* offers a departure from this earlier work, however, in its efforts to examine widowhood through its familial, rather than gendered, implications. The world of widows, Wilson tells us, "revolved around the family rather than issues of gender" (5). Her efforts to support this contention, while sometimes less than successful, confirm the complexity and the ambiguity of widows' lives during this period.

By examining wills, probate records, diaries, letters, and other related materials in both Chester County and Philadelphia from 1750 to 1850, Wilson provides important comparative data on inheritance patterns, especially (in figure 4-1) a useful perspective on the convergence of urban/rural patterns after 1810. Family survival, Wilson argues, was the key motivation guiding inheritance practices. As such, rural testators began to abandon their reliance on dower or thirds (and ceased to punish remarriage) only when changing economic forces no longer demanded such structural safeguards.

The complexity of widows' financial arrangements and coping strategies is well advanced in this work. In addition to outdoor relief, for instance, poor widows shared housing, worked when possible, and relied on the good will of friends and strangers. Such survival strategies in many instances reflect a continuation of life-long struggles against destitution. Older widows, Wilson tells us, were most likely to balance successfully such informal arrangements. The average widow at the Philadelphia Almshouse, on the other hand, was young, drawn

to the city by promises unmet.

Some issues are not so well served by Wilson's interpretation of data. For example, she argues that it was "rare" for a man to die without a will and have his estate settled in court (28). To support this contention, Wilson tells us (based on Jean Soderlund's work) that 36 percent of these potential cases were pursued in Chester County. Similarly, she says that "only a small percentage of married men felt compelled to restrict the remarriage of their spouses in their wills" (142), yet admits that nearly one third of married men in Chester County did so. Some conclusions suffer from lack of supporting evidence. How do we know, for instance, that widows mistreated by their caretakers under the allowance system could easily move to another caretaker? The possibility of elder abuse does not enter the discussion. Other loose interpretations abound in this work, giving the appearance of a forced thesis and casting doubt on many of her conclusions.

Wilson's work is valuable in its emphasis on the ideal (and often the reality) of reciprocity in relations between generations in the early republic. Her emphasis on the practical, familial nature of inheritance patterns, however, fails to counter the larger truth—that the transfer of property in the new republic, despite some shifts, continued to reinforce an underlying system designed to keep property in the hands of men.

University of Cincinnati Terri L. Premo

Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters & Society, 1790-1850. Edited by Caroline F. Sloat. (Sturbridge: Old Sturbridge Village, 1992. Pp. 143. Illustrations. $40.00; paper, $24.95.)

Meet Your Neighbors was published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title at Sturbridge Village to bring "to public view and scholarly attention a significant collection of non-academic portraits that has heretofore had little exposure through exhibition or publications" (5). The catalogue of exhibited oil paintings, miniatures, profiles, and a handful of daguerreotypes is preceded by three essays. Jack Larkin's "The Faces of Change: Images of Self & Society in New England, 1790-1850," the most successful, explains the shift in the use and meaning of portraiture between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as "a badge of high status" (10) to the nineteenth century when a dramatic increase in the number of portraits

represented for "the most part the prosperous upper middling beneficiaries of New England's economic transformation" (11). Larkin succinctly outlines the iconography and symbols that were common language to nineteenth-century viewers and that reveal information about the sitter and the world in which he lived. Larkin's statistical analysis of the numbers of paintings by gender and age in relation to the demographics of New England is enlightening, although based on a seemingly small sampling.

In "'Staring Likenesses': Portraiture in Rural New England, 1790-1850," Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser explores the tradition of portraiture, and the increasing demand by the growing middle class during the early nineteenth century for cheap and quickly painted likenesses and their eventual displacement by even cheaper daguerreotypes. Most of the artisan-painters were self- taught with a wide range of skills and training and often worked as ornamental and sign painters to supplement their portrait commissions. Through a discussion of particular artists she reveals the peripatetic lifestyle of most of the itinerants as they sought commissions through a "patronage network, family connection, or social entrée" (26). The discussion of the difficulties artists had in obtaining canvas and paints and the often chaotic settings in which they created their likenesses is illuminating.

"The Age of Democratic Portraiture: Artisan-Entrepreneurs and the Rise of Consumer Goods" by David Jaffee is the least convincing of the essays. Jaffee argues that artists employed stock formulas to standardize and speed portrait production to satisfy the growing rural market. He views portraits as consumer goods similar to mass produced objects like clocks and chairs. What Jaffee fails to recognize is that portraits were depictions of real people and as such were a custom-made item no matter how standardized the depiction and failure to please the subject would lose the artist his commission. Jaffee also contends that the artist became an agent of change seen as socially upwardly mobile and cites several successful artists. It would be interesting to know how many artists were unable to compete and turned to other trades as Augustus Fuller did, or ended their careers as did Nathan Negus in sickness and poverty.

The exhibition catalogue does achieve the goal of bringing new faces to the public. It is handsomely illustrated with an image of each of the catalogue entries, many of which have not been seen or published before. What is most disappointing about the publication is indeed not what is present but what has been omitted. The promises to use "portraiture as a prism through which to look at rural New England society" (6) and explore "the intricate networks of family, work,

and community in early nineteenth century New England" (6), are not kept. There is little in-depth discussion of how daily life in a rural community was conducted, as New England became industrialized, women's and men's roles dramatically changed as men went out into the world to work and women became the keepers of moral virtues as well as the home, as society became increasingly mobile, as the self-contained household met its demise, and as the changing technology of agriculture altered the nature of farming. The detailed biographical catalogue entries, carefully researched and prepared by Jessica F. Nicoll, leave the reader desiring to know more. Information on a myriad of subjects to give the reader a greater sense of nineteenth-century, rural New England could easily have been incorporated. Although we may have seen our neighbors, we did not meet them.

Philadelphia Maritime Museum Jane E. Allen

A Culture of Rights: The Bill of Rights in Philosophy, Politics and Law, 1791-1991. Edited by Michael J. Lacey and Knud Haakonssen. ***Woodrow Wilson Center Series***. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press/Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1991. Pp. viii, 474. $49.95.)

The bicentennial of the Bill of Rights spawned a mini-industry of commemorative volumes, of which *A Culture of Rights* is one. This collection has no more unity than most such, but the essays cluster more or less into two groups: one set of papers looks at rights in a late eighteenth-century perspective; the other set looks at late twentieth-century issues. Readers of this journal will no doubt find the first set of papers of greater interest.

This set of essays is itself a diverse bunch. Knud Haakonssen attempts something like a "pre-history" of American thinking about rights. James Hutson and Jack Rakove focus directly on the ostensible topic of the volume, the Bill of Rights itself. Charles Griswold hardly mentions the Bill of Rights in his treatment of Jefferson on slavery. Disparate as their essays are, the writers of the first set of papers seem to agree that historical and theoretical effort is required to recapture the frame of mind out of which the Bill of Rights emerged. Most ambitious is Haakonssen, who attempts to show that the philosophy of rights with which the Americans were operating was far different from the liberal, individualistic, and anti-authoritarian body of thought it is usually taken to be in our current reifications of

"traditions of discourse." Haakonssen tries to show this by surveying European, particularly Protestant, natural law tradition, carried on by the likes of Grotius, Pufendorf, Cumberland, and Burlamaqui (20). Haakonssen's chief conclusion concerns "the derivative status of natural rights vis-a-vis natural law and its duties" (33). Neither the traditional natural law philosophers nor the Americans of the founding era possessed a "subjective rights" theory of the sort most commonly associated with the idea of natural rights (42). Haakonssen's essay covers important ground, but it covers it too vaguely and too allusively to be of much help to non-specialists.

One of the strange weaknesses of Haakonssen's essay stands out when contrasted with Hutson's contribution. Hutson endorses the formerly standard view that John Locke is the thinker without whom one cannot understand the Americans on rights. Haakonssen, on the other hand, while he treats us to mini-lectures on thinkers as central as Thomas Rutherforth, hardly even mentions Locke. Hutson claims that Locke's theory of rights in the state of nature provides the conceptual antecedents for the American development of the Bill of Rights (cf. 77-78). What found expression in the Bill of Rights were either Lockean inalienable rights, rights people could not give up, or reserved rights, rights people could have, but chose not to give up (78). This conclusion helps make sense of the very language and function of the Bill of Rights; the rights are treated as though they already exist and certainly not as though the Bill of Rights was itself creating them. Less on target is Hutson's account of the issues between the Federalists and anti-Federalists on a Bill of Rights. Here his argument about a state of nature misleads him into seeing the anti-Federalists as those who see the union as a product of individuals emerging from a state of nature and the Federalists as those who see the union as merely a union of pre-existing states.

Better on the Federalist theory is Jack Rakove, whose essay presents a sensitive, nuanced, and very intelligent account of why the Federalists, especially Madison, at first rejected a Bill of Rights and then came around to accept it. Of the essays devoted to eighteenth-century themes, Rakove's will prove to be of most lasting value.

Although he attends very little to the Bill of Rights, Charles Griswold's reconsideration of Jefferson and slavery merits attention. One would have thought little new could be said on this topic, but Griswold says something relevant not only to Jefferson on slavery, but to our understanding of Jefferson's entire moral and political philosophy. He argues that Jefferson's primary commitment in philosophy is to Epicureanism, one aspect of which is an understanding of the high-

est human good as tranquility. Jefferson supplements this self-oriented Epicureanism with an other-oriented moral sense philosophy on which he grounds a theory of justice of the natural rights sort. Griswold contends that the issue of slavery reveals the ultimate incoherence in Jefferson's synthesis, in that one part (rights) leads to the unequivocal condemnation of slavery and the imposition of moral duties to oppose it, while the other leads to prudential accommodation with slavery. I, for one, do not find Griswold's position to be persuasive—it would take much space to say why—but it was nonetheless the most stimulating essay of the lot.

Carleton College Michael P. Zuckert

The Business of May Next: James Madison and the Founding. By William Lee Miller. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xii, 296. $24.95.)

The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy. By Drew R. McCoy. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp. xvii, 386. Illustrations. $29.95; paper, $14.95.)

James Madison is our favorite founder. The bicentennial of the federal Constitution gave a powerful boost to the diminutive Virginian's rising stock, and his high standing will be reinforced by publication of these two fine books. William Lee Miller follows Madison through the drafting, ratification, and amendment of the federal Constitution, capturing the excitement of this "extraordinary period of political creativity" (273) better than any other recent work. Drew McCoy's superb study gives us Madison in his retirement, looking back on these crucial years with the wisdom—and illusions—of his determinedly optimistic old age. Both authors demonstrate enormous admiration and affection for their subject and their approaches are broadly complementary. Not surprisingly, however, different angles and agendas lead to significantly different interpretations of Madison and the founding.

The most obvious difference between the two books is that Miller's is addressed to the so-called general reader while McCoy writes for fellow historians. Yet this distinction does not amount to much. Miller, a distinguished student and critic of American political culture and public life, combines an engaging, almost conversational style with high seriousness of purpose and carefulness of thought; McCoy, author of the influential *Elusive Republic* (1980), makes another valua-

ble contribution here to the ongoing scholarly debate on republicanism, but not at the expense of the general reader. By illuminating the importance of Madison's "character" to his contemporaries—his extraordinary self-restraint, his "sensitive respect for the opinions, motives, and feelings of others" (22)—McCoy makes Madison accessible and attractive to modern readers, even while making an important point to his specialist colleagues. McCoy takes brilliant advantage of this quasi-biographical form; his analysis of Madison's reflections in retirement on his achievements as a founder illuminates both periods—and the man. Miller, by contrast, is more interested in the founding than the founder. He wants his readers to experience with Madison the intellectual excitement of reading, writing, and arguing a new nation into existence.

Miller insists that Madison was "not conservative," that he "put the realistic insights and perspectives usually more characteristic of conservatives . . . at the service of a progressive politics—republicanism" (30). Miller's celebration of the framers' "republican realism" (91) reflects his own deepest convictions about the American system. His recreation of Madison's intellectual odyssey is meant to inspire emulation, not mindless veneration. Thanks to Madison, Miller writes, the United States "might even be said to have been brought into being as a result of moral reasoning; its own beginning might itself be an example of that government by mutual persuasion which is its own main point" (145). The use of the subjunctive here should not be taken as equivocation, but rather as an invitation to sustain the reasoned debate over first principles that Madison and his colleagues initiated. Such debate depends for us—as it depended for them—on a commitment to define and serve "the common purposes of an already existing community" (233).

Because Miller identifies the American regime with the process of "moral reasoning," not with the achievement of moral certainty, he is able to look at the founders' failings—most notably over slavery—without blinking. His analysis of *Federalist* 54, in which Madison seeks to dissociate himself from arguments he offers on behalf of the three-fifths clause—by putting them into an extended quotation from a fictitious southerner—is particularly insightful. Madison's uneasiness was a function of bad conscience, reflecting his awareness of the discrepancy between the progressive, moral ends of republicanism and the compromises the perpetuation of the union entailed. But for all their shortcomings, Madison and his fellow framers deserve credit for honoring republican principles, if only by their reluctance to refer explicitly to slavery in the Constitutional text. "The founding genera-

tion bequeathed" a double legacy, Miller concludes, compounding the promise of freedom with constitutional guarantees of slavery (136). McCoy is less charitable. By the end of his life, Madison's "conservative inclinations" made a mockery of "republican idealism"; he may have remained uneasy about slavery in his old age, but the solutions he offered—colonization and diffusion—were better designed to perpetuate than extirpate the institution (267).

McCoy's treatments of Madison's responses to the slavery issue and to sectionalist threats to the survival of the union show how the Madisonian middle ground was eroding in the 1820s and 1830s. McCoy delineates the pathos of Madison's situation as he sought to rebuff the forces of consolidationism on one hand and of nullification and disunion on the other. Yet, for all the sympathy of his portrayal, McCoy does not depict Madison as the victim of heedless extremists—or Madisonian republicanism as the progressive, regenerative creed extolled by Miller. Madison's commitment to the union, forged in the crisis of the 1780s that shaped his political career, was ultimately, radically inadequate to the exigencies of the sectional crisis—and to dealing with the moral dilemma of slavery.

The Last of the Fathers illuminates the limitations of Madisonian republicanism by showing how it was shaped by the first great crisis the union. Madison's—and America's dilemma—did not result from tensions between classical republican premises and modern conditions, but rather from the fundamental and increasingly problematic nexus between republicanism and federalism. Madison did not live to see his cherished union collapse; this was instead the fate of William Cabell Rives, "a Virginia-based Unionist who venerated a Madisonian tradition that Madison would have recognized and in all likelihood embraced." "Rives's story, and perforce Madison's," McCoy shows in a powerful concluding chapter, "was ultimately one of tragedy, not triumph." Madisonianism "unravelled, laying bare the tragic underside of a noble—and profoundly flawed—legacy" (329).

Miller would not quarrel with this account of the denouncement of the increasingly irrelevant and morally impoverished unionism that McCoy calls "Madisonianism." But he would argue that another genealogy links us to Madison and the framers, one that we can recapture by imaginatively reenacting the "business of May next." Miller suggests that if we emulate Madison's moral seriousness and political creativity we might yet fulfill the republican promise.

University of Virginia Peter S. Onuf

Portia: The World of Abigail Adams. By Edith B. Gelles. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pp. xviii, 227. $24.95.)

Edith B. Gelles is not a traditional biographer. This book is much more than that. It offers a sensitive and perceptive analysis of the "sphere" in which elite women of the eighteenth century operated. Eschewing the linear organization common to most biographies, Gelles constructs Adams's life topically, recapturing its rhythms from her own perspective. This is an Abigail-centered analysis. In Gelles's hands, Adams becomes significant in her own right, not merely because she was the wife and the mother of presidents. No one who is familiar with Gelles's articles and papers will be surprised at many of her conclusions. (Indeed, if the book has any drawback, it is that so much of it has already been presented elsewhere.) Abigail Adams was, argues Gelles, neither a feminist nor a modern woman. She defined herself in terms of traditional relationships. As daughter and sister, wife and mother, friend and companion, she made sense of a world that sometimes gratified her, often disappointed her, and never failed to capture her imagination. Adams saw her world through a spiritual lens. While she abandoned the stark Calvinism of her forebears, her sense of duty was profoundly shaped by religious precepts that generations of New Englanders would have understood immediately.

Gelles's portrait of Abigail Adams offers considerable insight into the reality that faced most eighteenth-century women. Interdisciplinary in nature, the book deftly interweaves the work of scholars in the fields of literature, psychology, and anthropology into her own careful analysis of Adams's world. Because she views Adams as a writer, Gelles is able to understand the flirtatious correspondence between Abigail Adams and Congressman James Lovell, whom Adams barely knew. Gelles argues that the letters reflected the power relationship existing between men and women in the revolutionary era. Similarly, Gelles's use of anthropology helps her make sense of the role of gossip in defining the relationship between Abigail Jr. and dramatist Royall Tyler. And, accepting the insights of psychologist Carol Gilligan, Gelles explains the relationship between Adams and Thomas Jefferson, as she argues that Adams viewed her world from a gendered perspective, expressing that perspective in a "different voice."

Gelles believes that eighteenth-century women generally accepted a position that was at once separate and unequal. This does not mean that they devalued their own importance. They did, however, exist in a patriarchal society, and they generally operated comfortably within

the framework it provided. Thus Adams protested when wartime exigencies forced her to assume the role of deputy husband. She saw the war as a burden, not as an opportunity to widen her sphere.

Gelles's picture of Abigail Adams tells readers at least as much about women's sphere in the eighteenth century as it does about Adams herself. Indeed, at times, Adams herself recedes strangely into the background. Nevertheless, this beautifully written analysis of Abigail Adams and her world is substantial contribution to the growing literature about women's sphere in the revolutionary era.

University of Mississippi Sheila Skemp

From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880. By Joseph P. Reidy. ***The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies***. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. xiv, 360. Illustrations. $45.00.)

Histories of the plantation South have often suffered from a rigid bifurcation. We have excellent studies of the peculiar institution that cease abruptly as soon as the first liberating column of Federal infantry tramps dustily into view, and intricate accounts of sharecropping whose numbers start crunching with the first wage contracts of 1865, but few surveys that cover the *longue durée* of the nineteenth century. Attention to this defect is the outstanding contribution of this work.

Joseph P. Reidy focuses on six counties in the Georgia black belt which surround the fall-line town of Macon. Beginning with the wave of white settlement that followed the withdrawal of the Creeks, Reidy traces the development of the yeoman frontier and the emergence of the plantation system in a few quick strokes. Though he recognizes the importance of the yeomen to the economy and politics of the region, his main concern is with the planters who loomed even larger, and above all, with the planters' chattels, who actually produced the fluffy foundation of the Cotton Kingdom.

Subsequent chapters trace Middle Georgia's experience in the Civil War, the origins of a free labor system under the Freedmen's Bureau, the tangled story of Reconstruction politics and the stabilization of a "tenancy" system which defined black and white toilers alike as agricultural proletarians with no inherent claim on the crops produced by their hands.

Two related themes tie Reidy's book together. One is the author's desire to tell the story of central Georgia from the perspective of the

Atlantic world. The rise and fall of slavery in Macon and its hinterland, Reidy makes clear, was part of a much larger pattern of worldwide trade and exploitation, and Reidy is commendably alert to relevant comparisons with the experience of Brazil, or Haiti, or the northern family farm. For readers unfamiliar with these developments, Reidy provides a valuable exposure to the big picture.

A second major theme is the importance of changing relations of production as fundamental sources of historical change. Reidy avoids a dogmatic pronouncement on whether the planters were "capitalists" or something more "seigneurial," but he clearly leans to the latter view and concludes that the planters became bourgeois in outlook as they adjusted to the postbellum world. More than most previous authors, moreover, Reidy lays great stress on the slaves' own independent production, viewing their garden plots, fishing trips, and poultry sales, as well as their more formidable "stealage," as the entering wedges of free market practices within the larger system of pure coercion. Planters' efforts to recapture control of hunting, fishing, and foraging rights by the black and white poor likewise form a key part of Reidy's analysis of postwar capitalist relations.

Reidy's larger themes are intriguing and highly suggestive, but he has trouble linking them to a chain of causality. Would General Sherman's torches have burned less brightly, we wonder, if Jamaica's experience had gone somewhat differently? Does Reidy believe that slavery fell from its inner contradictions, as free labor practices gradually ate out its core? Or did capitalism triumph because the bourgeoisie stamped out coon hunting in middle Georgia? In his interpretive passages, Reidy may be trying to make his evidence tell too much.

In the end, the evidence itself is extremely rich, and the decision to tell the story across the chasm of Civil War sets a splendid example for future studies. Reflecting the author's long experience with the Freedom and Southern Society Project, Reidy's account is especially detailed in documenting the experience of Georgia's slaves in resisting bondage, in aiding its overthrow, and in building a new world of quasi-freedom for themselves and their families. Throughout this story, African Americans' struggle to build their own world with the materials available to them shines through clearly. Reidy has told their story simply and well, and his account will be equally valuable to established scholars and to newcomers in the field.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Harry L. Watson

Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877. By Carl A. Brasseaux. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992. Pp. xiv, 252. Illustrations, map. $40.00; paper, $16.95.)

Over the past decade and a half, as scholarly interest in Louisiana's Cajuns has blossomed, Carl A. Brasseaux has established himself as the premier social historian of the group. His first book, *The Founding of New Acadia* (1987), charted the Acadian migration from Canada to Louisiana. *Acadian to Cajun* takes up the narrative from the Louisiana Purchase through Reconstruction.

In both works Brasseaux overcomes the comparative paucity of sources through the imaginative use of government and ecclesiastical records, accounts by travelers and other outsiders, and Cajun folklore. Perhaps unavoidably, he repeats certain themes in the two books: the geographical dispersal of Acadians in Louisiana, relations between Acadians and French Creoles, and the origins of slavery. Yet *Acadian to Cajun* advances Brasseaux's exploration of these topics not just chronologically but conceptually as well.

The book's main thesis holds that understanding Cajun social history (indeed, the social history of southern Louisiana) requires appreciating the dynamic of class differentiation. During the last quarter of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth centuries, the initial group of Acadian migrants—most of whom were self-sufficient farmers—became stratified along class lines. Brasseaux views slavery as crucial to this process. In particular, Cajuns who employed slaves to raise cotton and sugar rapidly evolved into a planter elite. Cajun planters mimicked first their Creole and later their Anglo-American counterparts in aristocratic pretension and penchant for conspicuous consumption. By the late antebellum period, these ethnic strands had intertwined into a single planter class.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Brasseaux's analysis concerns the evolution of small farmers as culturally and socially distinct from the planters. Although this distinctiveness often entailed poverty and illiteracy, its roots lay in a cultural politics of opposition against the values and institutions of the upper class. Brasseaux presses the point to suggest that, over time, Cajun culture provided a context wherein poor folk of Creole and Anglo-American ethnic backgrounds could find refuge and a sense of belonging.

Brasseaux also makes valuable contributions to understanding the Cajun role in local and state politics during the Civil War era, broadly defined. Although his discussion of these matters is frustratingly brief, it is nonetheless tantalizing. His analysis of vigilantism,

for instance, adopts a broad chronological perspective that facilitates situating specific episodes of violence in their respective historical contexts.

The manifest virtues of *Acadian to Cajun* cast its shortcomings in bright light. Two examples illustrate. First, he leaves largely unexplored the cultural and social ties between French-speaking European Americans and French-speaking African Americans in southern Louisiana. Whereas the former appear as historical actors, the latter appear as objects (slave or victims of vigilante violence) upon whom Cajuns acted.

Second, by restricting the framework of analysis almost exclusively to southern Louisiana, Brasseaux forsakes the opportunity to make larger comparisons. There are innumerable studies and a correspondingly large array of analytical tools for investigating the process of class differentiation in nineteenth-century rural communities in both the north and the south. Readers might yearn for a broader comparative perspective.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, *Acadain to Cajun* marks another milestone in the emerging historical literature on Louisiana's Cajun community.

Howard University Joseph P. Reidy

The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Vol. 2: ***1 October 1809-2 November 1810***. Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne Kerr Cross, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xliv, 645. $50.00.)

With the publication of this second volume of the presidential series of *The Papers of James Madison*, the editors continue the important task, launched eight years ago, of filling gaps in the published documentary record of Madison's presidency. If the first volume focusing on Madison's early months in office offered scholars little new information about his presidency, the second volume is more satisfying. It casts new light on a number of important issues, especially foreign policy questions growing out of America's relations with England and France during the Napoleonic Wars.

Foreign policy issues dominated Madison's presidency during the thirteen-month period covered here. The correspondence discloses the complexity of the problems Madison confronted in trying to preserve American neutrality and also devise trade policies that would produce

enough customs revenue to balance the budget and retire the national debt. The vexations of dealing with the well-meaning but inexperienced British minister David Erskine and his overbearing successor, Francis James Jackson, compounded his problems. Additionally, he had to contend with a recalcitrant Congress. It rejected Madison's navigation bill, called Macon's Bill No. 1, which more than any subsequently enacted congressional measure promised to achieve American diplomatic and trade objectives. If successful, it would have increased customs revenue and spared the government the pain of enforcing domestic trade restrictions against its own citizens. Madison was not deceived by Congress's substitute measure, Macon's Bill No. 2. He did not think that "feeble" measure would achieve the desired objectives. Congress also rejected his January 1810 recommendation to enact measures for improving the nation's defenses. His efforts to institute militia reform, enlist volunteers, and place the army and navy in a state of readiness were unsuccessful. The documents and correspondence contained in this volume do not support the charge of Madison's critics that war with England in 1812 resulted from the failure of presidential leadership.

Although much of Madison's attention during 1809-1810 was taken up with foreign policy problems relating to England and France, the documents here reveal that he devoted a great deal of time to the West Florida question. The dissolution of the Spanish empire in America provided Madison with the opportunity to expand national boundaries. He moved decisively to annex West Florida in October 1810. The editors offer a long and excellent note detailing aspects of Madison's actions leading to the annexation. But neither that note nor the documents themselves tell the full story. The editors acknowledge that "in many cases after 1809, the best sources of information about Madison's presidential decisions are to be found not in his own correspondence but in records that fall outside the criteria established for the inclusion of documents in this edition" (xxxi). The editors assist the reader by citing additional historical sources containing evidence bearing on Madison's conduct. Beyond this, they maintain the same high standards of editorial scholarship that were established at the inception of *The Papers of James Madison* more than thirty years ago and which were faithfully upheld by editor-in-chief Robert A. Rutland until his retirement in 1986.

Mississippi State University Charles D. Lowery

A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier. By Joan E. Cashin. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. viii, 198. Illustrations, map. $29.95.)

Cashin examines the perspectives and experiences of planter families as they settled the Old Southwest between 1810 and 1860. As the title suggests she focuses on family migration and compares male and female expectations and reactions to life on the frontier. She claims these families were not the egalitarian, gender-bending units that other historians have claimed. In fact, men became more patriarchal and women more powerless the farther they ventured from the seacoast. The family "pacts," as she styles them, broke down in a flurry of repressive masculinity. At best women were isolated from their kin, at worst they suffered physical abuse at the hands of their husbands. These frontier families resemble those on the Overland Trail described in the now classic study by John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (1979). The wagon trains also were full of carefree men and lonely women. Men sought escape from family connections women yearned to maintain them.

What is new here is a thorough and equally balanced gender study where the behavior and thoughts of men are compared directly with those of women. Cashin makes good use of the new "men studies" literature presenting gender as a dichotomous category with equal weight to both the male and female perspective. This study adds to the increasing body of literature that does this comparative kind of analysis. Cashin's description of the generational conflict between men is superb. Young men looked for independence on the frontier, both financial independence and independence from familial and paternal control. What is harder to decipher, however, is Cashin's description of changing concepts of masculinity. She finds a crude, violent masculine ethos on the frontier. I think the pattern she uncovers is not so new as it is a debasement of upper-class masculinity. These young men growing up on the frontier return to a kind of masculinity that could easily be found on the seacoast among those below the planter class. This "masculinity" is also distinctly self-destructive. Cashin talks of alcoholism, violence, and gambling. Many men indulged in these vices to the point of ruin. Were these men in fact frustrated over their circumstances? Maybe the frontier was not the haven that they hoped it would be. This is a possibility that the author does not fully explore and would stand against her major premise of male contentment in the Old Southwest.

Women and slaves are victims in this story. Slaves certainly were victimized and had few choices. Women on the other hand are also described as powerless. The reasoning is that they were cut off from kin networks and, therefore, had little choice but to depend on their volatile husbands. I think this is too stark a portrait. Women, unlike slaves, certainly had the option to leave. To see women as powerless in this period undervalues the often subtle power available to marginalized groups and underestimates their potential.

This book, therefore, adds to our knowledge of gender relations on the frontier if downplaying the contributions and abilities of women. Cashin's book is thorough if at times repetitive, perhaps the result of showing both sides of the gender coin. Nonetheless, *A Family Venture* is a must for those interested in the growing literature on comparative gender studies.

Connecticut College Lisa Wilson

The Stolen House. By Bernard L. Herman. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xii, 286. Illustrations, diagrams, tables, graphs, maps. $35.00; paper, $16.95.)

In 1812, seven siblings launched a suit against their guardian-stepfather alleging that he had appropriated property left by their father over two decades earlier by cutting timber, removing fences, letting clearings deteriorate, and even hauling a new house to his own holdings before selling the despoiled acreage to his brother for much less than its earlier worth. The lawsuit itself was of no great import; but it imaginatively serves as the cord by which the author binds together his chapters on forestry, farming, fencing, and housing to provide a view of life in a less-than-prosperous area of southern Delaware in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A replacement for an earlier log house and a step up for its owners, the "stolen house" had only one ground-floor room. Herman combines descriptions of it (from depositions) with drawings, floor plans, and photographs of one-room houses still in the area to determine its likely form. He then utilizes available information on all homes nearby to show that the single-room dwelling was not just a temporary shelter of the colonial or frontier years, but a valued home type used locally for decades—and property worth stealing.

Despite the contribution made to knowledge of vernacular architecture, the book's theoretical framework and sense of mission detract

from the pleasure of reading it, especially when the author fails to convince. A reader who, while not denying that material culture is of historical value, finds it difficult to believe that *things* "signify" social relationships may be annoyed by the repetitive statements that "we" have reached certain conclusions. Material items themselves are less valuable as indicants of social or economic relationships than are individuals' attitudes toward those items; and any historian must substantiate his conclusions about the value of or attitudes toward objects, even houses, with written evidence.

Herman in fact does this well, employing documents from government and courts as well as literary accounts, to determine the social and economic composition of the society in which the lawsuit developed. A few weaknesses do exist, both in facts and in conclusions. Is there supporting evidence for the conversations and other minutiae forming the fiction-like scene opening the second chapter? Did the father die in 1784, as claimed on page 23, or in 1787, as noted on page 21? As his debts, often mentioned, were never explained, it must be that enumeration was lacking; but he appears to have been better situated than the author concludes, insofar as a man without oxen did not necessarily lack the means to till his land if he had other cattle. Cows were used for draft work when needed.

A puzzling factor was the mother; if her "orphans" needed a guardian only after her remarriage, might it be that she acquiesced in or encouraged her new husband's depredations? Did she perhaps want her former house for her new home? A shortage of documentary evidence about her and local women in general leaves her role unclear.

University of Southern Maine Joyce K. Bibber

Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis. By Jeffrey S. Adler. ***Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History***. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. vii, 274. $42.50.)

In this work, Jeffrey Adler proposes an analysis of "the forces that sparked the rise and triggered the fall of St. Louis. It also considers the ways," the author contends, "in which those forces spurred the development of Chicago, the greatest boomtown in nineteenth century America" (1). To achieve this formidable goal in a relatively short text, largely bereft of quantitative evidence and lacking an ex-

plicit model of regional economic development, may seem to present an insurmountable challenge. In fact Adler's work falls short of its goal.

The city of St. Louis is depicted as one of glaring contrasts. Its locational advantages astride the nation's largest inland waterway system and on the margin of the antebellum frontier virtually assured its position as both the major focus of western commerce and the gateway to the West. Both the north-south flow of trade, considerably enhanced by the appearance of steam navigation in 1817, and the flood of western migration strengthened the city's economic life.

In contrast to these clear assets, St. Louis faced, according to Adler, a state government that "repeatedly dedicated itself to creating a legal and institutional environment that would prevent the growth of St. Louis" (3). Missouri legislators rejected the banking and corporate reforms that stimulated economic development elsewhere. As a result, St. Louis was served by no canals, had no commercial banking facilities until the late 1850s, and was slow in developing a railroad system.

The thrust of Adler's argument is that the fate of St. Louis, and other western cities as well, was a result of external forces. Local boosterism notwithstanding, venture capital in St. Louis and other western cities flowed not from local or hinterland sources but from the cities of the Atlantic seaboard. New Yorkers and New Englanders "directed surplus goods, extra capital, and ambitious clerks to the western city that seemed most responsive to their needs" (10).

As a result of unfavorable local conditions and the reliance on external capital infusions, says Adler, the economy of St. Louis was unusually fragile: "The financial downturns that slowed the growth of other cities nearly arrested the growth of St. Louis" (3). Despite periods of great prosperity its economy "rested on a flawed foundation" (90).

The relative success of St. Louis was not a function of local activities, attitudes, or conditions but instead derived from the perceptions of eastern investors. This made St. Louis particularly vulnerable to the fickle concept of "image."

Sectionalism, according to Adler, represented the ultimate external force. The debate over slavery profoundly altered the development of St. Louis and that of its principal rival. "In larger part, St. Louis businesses languished not because trade, profits, or land values declined but because New York merchants believed that the commercial foundations of the marketplace would soon crumble" (176). As St. Louis seemed to become an increasingly southern city, eastern

capital was redirected to its chief rival, Chicago. "In short, the sectional crisis redefined the relationship between Yankee merchants and their St. Louis colony. As a result, it remade the urban West" (177).

For those seeking a clearer picture of the history of antebellum St. Louis this work will prove both interesting and useful. Those seeking an empirically supported analysis of comparative regional growth will be disappointed.

West Virginia University Donald R. Adams, Jr.

***Interpreting Tocqueville's* Democracy in America**. Edited by Ken Masugi. (Savage, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991. Pp. xxii, 526. $62.50; paper, $24.95.)

The field of American intellectual history has been invigorated in recent years by debates about which texts should be studied, how they should be interpreted, and what their relevant contexts might be. Writings produced in the early republic have often been the subject of this intensified scholarly interest, because the period between the ratification of the Constitution and the tragic climax of the sectional crisis included the nation's first and extraordinary intellectual flowering. Whatever a historian's theoretical inclinations, the texts of the early republic can no longer be approached without at least wondering about the boundaries of the canon, reflecting on the possible complexities of language, and speculating about the way written words might be part of broad cultural dialogues. The scholarly questions are provocative, even if the answers are contested.

In this setting, this collection of eighteen essays written primarily by political scientists and edited by Ken Masugi strikes a traditional note. In terms of method, the authors focus without apology on the masterwork of a man long acknowledged as a preeminent observer of American culture. Nearly all of the essayists take Tocqueville's words at face value as transparent expressions of ideas. The apparent simplicity of this interpretive technique does not mean, however, that the writers approach Tocqueville's work without a distinctive point of view. At the risk of emphasizing too much the common ground of a group of intelligent thinkers not always in mutual agreement, the essayists do recur to the cautionary aspects of Tocqueville's vision of democracy in America and, specifically, to the way mores—the salutary "habits of the heart," in Tocqueville's words—can temper the disorderly potential of equality and individualism and so preserve the

polity. In particular, the attention given in this volume of Tocqueville's concern with moral and religious principles is arresting. To identify this work as an analysis of high-brow ideas that is informed by discernible values should not detract from the book's merits and authority, but simply locate it in current scholarly discussions. Indeed, it is refreshing to read these patient and thoughtful reflections on the major text of a brilliant theorist. Above all, the essays reaffirm the indispensable nature of *Democracy in America* as a commentary on the society of the early republic and on the legacy of democracy for modern people.

Individual essays in the collection are grouped under three headings: Tocqueville's relationships to political thought, political organization, and the mores or customs of democracy. These divisions somewhat obscure the writers' consistent focus on ideas rather than social facts. For example, John Adams Wettergreen discusses "Modern Commerce," a selection included in the category "Tocqueville and Politics," in terms of interacting principles such as democracy, modernity, and bureaucracy. For historians, it may be more helpful to distinguish the essays according to two subtler themes, Tocqueville's debts to his intellectual predecessors and his relevance to modern audiences. James T. Schleifer's "Jefferson and Tocqueville," the only contribution by a historian, is an excellent analysis of Tocqueville's reading, in part appreciative and in part critical, of Thomas Jefferson. Ralph C. Hancock argues in favor of Tocqueville's appreciation of Christianity, Catherine H. Zuckert considers Tocqueville's affirmation of human freedom in relation to the ideas of Aristotle and Hegel, and Wilhelm Hennis explores Tocqueville's affinities with Rousseau. Robert N. Bellah notes how similar the concepts of individualism were in the writings of Tocqueville and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Tocqueville's contemporary, and how much the values of today's Americans still conform to those nineteenth-century definitions of the self. Looking beyond Tocqueville's connections with individual thinkers, James W. Ceasar presents Tocqueville as a synthesizer of rationalist and traditionalist perspectives in political philosophy.

Perhaps because most of the essayists are social scientists and policymakers, many tend not only to analyze Tocqueville's ideas but to apply them in a prescriptive spirit. William Kristol takes modern feminists to task for their premise, in his view, that the sexes may be equal and similar. He recommends Tocqueville's praise of antebellum women, who Tocqueville believed chose to submit to family roles and to be preservers of values. Sombat Chantornvong, a professor of

political science in Bangkok, argues provocatively that democracy in Asia will not accompany economic development unless the principles of freedom—Tocqueville's mores—are strenuously encouraged alongside fiscal growth. Twentieth-century historians have generally been cautious about seeking lessons in history for modern times. But theorists who have questioned the possibility of objectivity and pointed to the inevitable involvement of scholars with their subjects may have created a more receptive audience among historians for the unapologetic presentism of a number of these sections.

In sum, *Interpreting Tocqueville's* Democracy in America is a collection of kindred and thoughtful perspectives on a seminal antebellum text about American culture. Historians will be challenged to think about Alexis de Tocqueville in new ways by reading these serious yet accessible commentaries.

Penn State University Anne C. Rose

Witness for Freedom: African American Voices on Race, Slavery and Emancipation. Edited by C. Peter Ripley *et al.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993. Pp. xxiv, 306. Illustrations. $29.95; paper, $10.95.)

This collection is based on the diverse thought and writings of a group of black idealistic interlopers whose intellectual dissidence far exceeded their social, political, and economic clout. The people of color on whose thought Ripley's *Witness for Freedom* is based were eloquent in their writings and truer to the spirit of democracy than the regnant men who engineered the design on which America was built.

There are a number of aspects of *Witness for Freedom* which render it superb, not the least of which are an extensive bibliographic essay with supporting secondary materials, a glossary containing biographical sketches, and an erudite subject index—somewhat rare in such collections. In this most recent volume, Ripley and his co-editors present the final installment of the Black Abolitionist Papers project with eighty-nine diverse documents which are said to be the best of the five-volume project. These documents well represent the resilience, progressive spirit, and hope of black men and women during the pre- and post-Civil War periods.

In the face of a dastardly, horrific sociopolitical system replete with slavery, racism, kidnapping, and violence, this volume solidifies the fact that overall, blacks kept the faith in America during the peril-

ous times in question. The thought collected here from a variety of sources, including black-authored books, newspapers, and other materials show that the race was striving to survive and to be accepted by a nation that was exceedingly harsh in its rejection, but yet stubborn in its dependence on slave labor used for economic advancement.

Remarkably impressive in the collection is a section containing writings and speeches of black women abolitionists, including Sarah M. Douglass, Sarah Forten, Sojourner Truth, and Frances Ellen Watkins who lectured and recited poetry on behalf of the antislavery and women's rights movements. This section whets the appetite for other such material and underscores the fact that black women played significant roles in all phases of the abolitionist movement.

For my taste, the most extraordinary documents contained in this collection regard a rather progressive pre-Civil War black press. The evidence is that a group of black editors and associates were futuristic in their attempt at a comprehensive national press association. Little known is the fact that it was the illustrious Frederick Douglass who blocked a national press association as it was prompted in the Negro convention movement.

Lehigh University Frankie Hutton

From Revivals to Removal: Jeremiah Evarts, the Cherokee Nation, and the Search for the Soul of America. By John A. Andrew III. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. Pp. x, 434. Illustration. $45.00.)

This is not just another book about the 1830s forced removal of the Cherokee and other eastern tribes. While it certainly deals with that issue, the author's main focus is on ideas about public virtue, morality, and the changes that swept through American society in the early nineteenth century. Using Jeremiah Evarts as his focal point, Andrew examines the increasingly bitter debate over the American national character and the impact of that debate on religious, political, and economic trends within the society. Born into a Vermont farm family, the sickly Evarts turned to education for personal advancement. In 1802 he experienced a deeply personal religious conversion as he graduated from Yale College. After marriage and graduation from law school, he turned his attention to public affairs and religious reform against what he considered declining public morality and a weakening of republican virtue in America.

The author makes little effort to provide more than incidental biographical data about Evarts, choosing instead to examine the sub-

ject's ideas and actions. He depicts Evarts as a deeply introspective person who espoused the atypical attitudes of conservative, evangelical Protestant Christianity. Although not in the upper class, Evarts spoke articulately for that group. This study provides an intellectual history of one major variety of Christian reform thought as it examines attempts to use earlier revolutionary era republican ideas to stem the changes being produced by the rapid shift to an individually oriented competitive ethos in the post-War of 1812 era. Andrew traces Evarts's career from his editorship of the *Panoplist* in 1810 to his death in 1831. In those decades the reformer struggled to found benevolent societies, labored as treasurer and then corresponding secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and supported reforms related to enforcing Sabbararian laws, temperance, and mission work among the Indians.

It was this last effort that brought him and the American Board directly into the political maelstrom of Indian removal. Board officials supported efforts to bring about acculturation and eventual assimilation of the tribes of the Southeast. By the late 1820s, however, their modest success helped the arguments of those demanding the removal of all Indians beyond the Mississippi. Evarts led American Board efforts to gain widespread public support to oppose federal removal plans and he wrote twenty-four essays signed "William Penn" in that effort. In these he stated that American public viture demanded that the government abide by its treaty commitments to the tribes. In following this debate the author demonstrates how the religious and moral arguments of an earlier generation failed to match those of the new opportunistic and individualistic ideas of the 1830 era.

The narrative presents and analyzes Evarts's ideas with care. It shows their development and application to public life. The author has used the Evarts materials with skill and deals with issues raised by existing scholarship well. He presents his subject as a man driven by personal ideas that separated him from most of American society, but whose insights are valuable for an understanding of the Jacksonian era debates over Indian removal.

University of Arizona Roger L. Nichols

Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture. By Elizabeth Moss. ***Southern Literary Studies.*** (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992. Pp. xii, 249. $27.50.)

This is an illuminating examination of a forgotten subject—antebellum domestic fiction written by southern women in defense of slavery

and plantation culture. To be sure, the domestic novel has enjoyed a revival in recent years, but invariably it is the work of women writers from the North, such as Catherine Sedgwick, Sara Willis Parton, and Susan Warner, that has received attention. Elizabeth Moss corrects the view that the genre is all of a piece, arguing instead for the existence of a distinct southern variation of the form, which she ably sets off against the work of these more prominent northerners.

Moss, a professional historian, contends that unlike their reform-minded, feminist counterparts in the North, the writers who constituted this counter-tradition were apologists for the dominant values of their region. They did not portray women as oppressed by patriarchal culture. However, as Moss is careful to point out, neither did they simply mirror the ideology of the ruling masters. Instead, they offered a defense of southern culture that emphasized the regenerative powers of home, family, and community, and the high calling of the planter mistress (who also had much to gain personally) in preserving the benefits of a traditional, nurturing, mutually-supportive civilization.

Moss examines the public and private writings of five once-popular authors: Caroline Gilman, Caroline Hentz, Maria McIntosh, Mary Virginia Terhune, and Augusta Evans. After assessing their common concerns and objectives as domestic novelists, particularly their early efforts to inspire southern women to lead heroic lives and take a more active role in their community, she divides the group into two generations, and shows how changing historical circumstances led to distinct outlooks and varied narrative strategies within the genre. Writing before any threat of war, the authors of the first generation, Gilman, Hentz, and McIntosh, tried to effect a reconciliation between contentious neighbors by emphasizing what the two regions had in common, though they also betrayed their abhorrence of the North's corrupting materialism and individualism. By contrast, the second generation, Terhune and Evans, came of age in more bellicose times, when the unifying values and experiences of the early republic were a distant memory, and abolitionism and the equally threatening women's rights movement were in full swing; these writers were more deeply sectionalist in outlook, and less inclined to look for commonalities between the regions. Once the war started, it was their task to wrestle with the question of how the South became the aggressor. But by that point the domestic novel, as an instrument of education and reconciliation, had outlived its usefulness.

Moss's study, then, is valuable on at least three counts. It corrects the prevailing view of the domestic novel as innocent of regional culture. It complicates our understanding of women's fiction of the nine-

teenth century, reminding us that not all female authors of this period strained against the yoke of partriarchalism. And, what is perhaps most important, it details how the female half of the planter class went about justifying the "peculiar institution" to themselves, to their contemporary readers, and to posterity.

George Washington University Christopher Sten

Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life, Vol. I: ***The Private Years***. By Charles Capper. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. xv, 422. Illustrations. $39.95.)

One great portrait of Margaret Fuller has survived, a familiar photograph of her in profile, reading. Now a second great portrait emerges, this one in words by biographer Charles Capper. No longer in profile, this portrait is a multi-dimensional picture, a motion picture that reveals its subject growing, unfolding, developing against the background of Boston and environs after her birth in 1810, and among the people who served as powerful influences in her life.

The theme of alienation, Fuller's "otherness," the fact that she never fit socially because of her exceptional education as a female, directs this biography. Yet Fuller wrote "I love best to be a woman" (338), and Capper honors that statement. He has written about the early life of a woman who lived on the margins within her family that was not quite "in" among Boston's elite; among the great New England thinkers of her time, mostly male theologians, educators, and developing Transcendentalists, whom she influenced as much as she was influenced by them. Historically, she was marginalized, a "European" thinker attracted by Romantics, Carlyle, and Goethe, more than to the prevailing secular Puritan and enlightened tradition of nineteenth-century New England.

Charles Capper captures all of this in *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life: The Private Years*, the first of his projected two-volume biography. Capper changes the inherited picture in several ways. His broad and deep reading of all the primary source material marks this as a first comprehensive biography of this important American thinker—he calls her the "most written-about woman in early American history" (ix). For the first time, he dignifies her mother as a dynamic influence in her life. He weaves her affective and intellectual persona, her struggles waged on familial (the family fortunes, never great, disappeared after her father's death, leaving her as main sup-

port of her mother and four younger siblings), social (a rare erudition among women, accompanied by a sensitive and perhaps off-putting arrogant manner), and economic (how to support herself, given that she apparently would not marry) fronts. Mostly this is an intellectual portrait, tracing the process and the path, but not yet her fully realized and consistent philosophy. She is still developing at the close of the first volume of her life story.

Strangely, Capper calls this the "private years." They are private only in the sense that she was less a public figure than she would become. Fuller functioned among very public people whom Capper beautifully profiles throughout the book that might better have been subtitled, "The Early Years." Sometimes, as well, the minute and careful detailing of this life begs for more analysis, especially in the latter part. The sheer mountain of information in this mostly intellectual biography tends to flatten the story, not highlighting some experiences over others. Finally, in a typical biographer's dilemma, Capper overquotes, especially in the last chapters.

In the end, though, we have a masterful portrait of Margaret Fuller, the most comprehensive to date, and likely to become the definitive biography of this important figure in nineteenth-century American history.

Stanford University Edith Gelles

PUBLICATION NOTICES

The Roots of Liberty: Magna Carta, Ancient Constitution, and the Anglo-American Tradition of Rule of Law. Edited by Ellis Sandoz. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993. Pp. 335. $44.95.)

This volume grew out of a conference held at Windsor Castle in which the participants rejected implicitly the view that the concept of liberty held by American revolutionaries was the product of the seventeenth or eighteenth century and argue the centrality of Anglo-Saxon precedents and Magna Carta in the evolution of Anglo-American constitutional and legal development. In an introduction entitled "Fortescue, Coke, and Anglo-American Constitution," the editor establishes the context for four essays that pursue this theme: "The Ancient Constitution in Medieval England," by J. C. Holt; "The Place of Magna Carta and the Ancient Constitution in Sixteenth-Century English Thought," by Christopher W. Brooks; "Ancient Constitutions in the Age of Sir Edmund Coke and John Selden," by Paul Christianson; and "The Jurisprudence of Liberty: The Ancient Constitution in the Legal Historiography of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," by John Phillip Reid. Corinne Comstock Weston contributes an epilogue which summarizes the essays and places them in historiographical context. JCB

French America: Mobility, Identity, and Minority Experience Across the Continent. Edited by Dean R. Louder and Eric Waddell. Translated by Franklin Philip. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993 [1983]. Pp. xviii, 371. Maps, $42.50; paper, $16.50.)

This collection of essays on North American Francophone communities first appeared in the wake of the 1980 Referendum on Sovereignty-Association under the title *Du continent perdu a l'archipel retrouve: Le Quebec et l'Amerique francaise*. Individual essays trace the history of French-speaking people in a specific area, *e.g.*, New England, the Canadian West, Missouri, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, East Texas, and Louisiana; describe its relations with surrounding Anglophone cultures; and assess its chances of survival as a separate cultural grouping. The role of Quebec as a "powerful cultural hearth," appears to be overemphasized to this English-speaking reader and the role assigned it to reflect a search for unity by some of the contribu-

tors. Nonetheless, this is the only volume on its topic and is remarkably accessible to the general reader, given the varying disciplines of the contributors. JCB

Spanish Texas, 1519-1821. By Donald E. Chipman. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992. Pp. xiii, 343. Maps, illustrations. $30.00; paper, $14.95.)

Approximately half of this well-balanced survey describes the exploration and outposts established in Texas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but focuses on the missions, presidios, and civil settlements that developed and flourished during the 1700s. Three chapters trace the decline of the missions after 1783, describe the turbulence that swept the province between 1803 and 1821, and assess the importance and persistence of Hispanic legacies. There are other works on some of the subjects addressed by Chipman, but no other single volume covers the entire era of Spanish rule in Texas as well as he does. JCB

A History of the United States. By Edward Channing. Edited and abridged by Davis D. Joyce. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993. Pp. xxiv, 338. $57.50; paper, $32.50.)

Channing's six-volume history of the United States prior to 1865 will almost surely be the last work by a single author to attempt to explain so long an era in such detail. Joyce, and many others, believe that Channing's work, though published between 1905 and 1925, continues to bear reading and has selected chapters from each volume that "are broadly representative of Channing's work in terms of style, emphasis, interpretation, etc. [and that] present, to as great an extent as possible, the essence" of the six volumes (xix). In brief introductions to the selections from each volume Joyce provides an overview of the interpretation presented by Channing in the volume, explains why each section was chosen, and quotes assessments of Channing's views by subsequent historians. JCB

General James Grant: Scottish Soldier and Royal Governor of East Florida. By Paul David Nelson. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993. Pp. xi, 207. Illustrations. $29.95.)

Grant grew up in Scotland; served in the Seven Years War, as the first British governor of East Florida (1763-1773), in America (1775-

1779, including as chief of British forces in the West Indies, 1778-1779); and was a member of Parliament and commander of troops in England during most of the 1780s and 1790s. Nelson brings to this study skills honed on biographies of Anthony Wayne, Horatio Gates, and William Tryon. It will stand as the standard work on an important individual long in need of a biography. JCB

The War for America, 1775-1783. By Piers Mackesy. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 [1964]. Pp. xxx, 565. Maps, illustrations. Paper, $16.95.)

This edition makes available again Mackesy's classic study of British strategy in its broadest form, the misperceptions of the leaders who formulated the plans to subdue America, the miscarrying of those plans, and the price paid by Britain and those leaders. John W. Shy's brief introduction adds to the work by placing Mackesy's work in context and explaining how his military service and his family background—his father, General P. J. Mackesy, was blamed for British failure at Narvik—helped him to understand and depict the links between strategy, logistics, and operations and drew him to study campaigns in which the British were either unsuccessful or only narrowly defeated their enemies. JCB

A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution. By Johann Conrad Dohla. Translated and edited by Bruce E. Burgoyne. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Pp. xxiv, 276. Maps, illustrations. Paper, $13.95.)

This diary of a private who served in the American Revolution from 1777 to the end now appears in paperback. It was reviewed in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Fall 1990). JCB

The Correspondence of Richard Price, Vol. II: ***March 1778-February 1786***. Edited by D. O. Thomas. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. Pp. xxv, 348. $49.95.)

This second of three projected volumes of Price's correspondence will interest Americanists because Price continued to correspond with Americans during the Revolutionary War, wrote pamphlets defending their right to self-government, and became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences at Boston and the American

Philosophical Society at Philadelphia. After the war his circle of American correspondents widened considerably and reflect the re-establishment of a transatlantic cultural community. JCB

The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States. Edited by Kermit L. Hall *et al.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. xx, 1032. Illustrations. $45.00.)

This volume is everything a good reference work should be. It is comprehensive, up to date, clearly written, easy to use, and affordable. Its thousand-plus entries include every justice who served on the Court, important cases, key issues (*e.g.*, "State Sovereignty and States' Rights" and "Assembly and Association"), leading attorneys who appeared before the Court, concepts (*e.g.*, "Selective Exclusiveness" and "Original Package Doctrine"), the relationship of groups and other institutions with the Court (*e.g.*, "Senate Judiciary Committee," "Labor," and "State Courts"), and four extended essays that outline the history of the Court. Cross references at the end of entries, bibliographic references, and topical and case indices guide the user to additional information. Appendices on "Nomination and Succession of the Justices" and "Trivia and Traditions of the Court" are also helpful. The editor-in-chief, Kermit L. Hall, and his co-editors, James W. Ely, Jr., Joel B. Grossman, and William M. Wieck, have gathered an impressive group of contributions and together produced a reference work which will be useful to a wide variety of readers. JCB

John Colter: His Years in the Rockies. By Burton Harris. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 [1952]. Pp. xxxv, 180. Maps, illustrations. Paper, $8.95.)

Colter accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific and back eastward as far as North Dakota where he joined two trappers on a year-long search for beaver. En route down the Missouri in 1807, Colter met and joined a party of traders headed for the confluence of the Yellowstone and Big Horn rivers. He traveled alone into present-day Wyoming before settling on a farm in Missouri Territory. Harris's biography of Colter is reprinted with its 1977 "Addenda" and an eight-page introduction in which David Lavender explains Harris's research method and assesses the documentary evidence supporting each section of the book. JCB

Astoria and Empire. By James P. Ronda. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Pp. xiv, 400. Illustrations, maps. Paper, $16.95.)

Ronda's account of John Jacob Astor's establishment of a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River, reprinted in paperback, was reviewed in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, 11 (Summer 1991). JCB

John Quincy Adams: A Bibliography. Compiled by Lynn H. Parsons. ***Bibliographies of the Presidents of the United States***. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993. Pp. xvii, 217. Illustration. $55.00.)

This comprehensive bibliography is organized to provide easy access to works on the long career of John Quincy Adams. It opens with a chronology followed by sections on manuscript and archival sources, lists of writings by Adams, and general biographies. Six sections cover his career chronologically, and concluding sections list works on his childhood and personal life, historiographical interpretations of Adams and his career, and a section on life portraits. Each section is subdivided and author and subject indices ease accessibility. The price may limit personal purchases, but library copies will be consulted often. JCB

The Destruction of California Indians. Edited by Robert F. Heizer. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 [1974]. Pp. xxi, 321. Illustrations. Paper, $12.95.)

The subtitle, "A collection of documents from the period 1847 to 1865 in which are described some of the things that happened to some of the Indians of California," reflects the contents of this volume. The documents are arranged in twelve thematic chapters such as "Proposals for Indian Protection and Welfare," "Scalping of Indians," and "Indian Mistreatment of Chinese," each of which is briefly introduced by Heizer. Albert L. Hurtado's introduction to this "Bison Book Edition" sketches the life of Heizer who died in 1979. JCB

The Mexican War Journals and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham. Edited by Robert Ryal Miller. ***Essays on the American West***. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991. Pp. xxi, 141. Illustrations, maps. Paper, $12.95.)

This work was reviewed in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, 11 (Winter 1991), when the clothbound edition was published. JCB

Science in the Subarctic: Trappers, Traders, and the Smithsonian Institution. By Debra Lindsay. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. Pp. xviii, 176. Illustrations. $34.00.)

Spencer F. Baird's plans for the Smithsonian and the advances he pioneered in fieldwork in the 1850s are described as an introduction to the work of Robert Kinnicott whom Baird sent on an expedition to northwestern Canada in 1859. Over the next decade the collaboration between Baird in Washington and Kennicott in the field led to the return of over 12,000 natural history specimens, 500 artifacts, and several volumes of field notes that laid the basis for the Smithsonian's collections and studies of the Arctic. JCB

News From the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home. Edited by Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbich, and Ulrike Sommer. Translated by Susan Carter Vogel. ***Documents in American Social History***. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. Pp. ix, 645. Illustrations, maps, graphs. $35.00; paper, $26.95.)

This collection of letters was first published in Germany in 1988, in cloth in the United States in 1991, and now appears in paperback for the first time. Twenty sets of letters are divided into three sections based on the occupation of the sender: "Farmers," "Workers," and "Domestic Servants." Five of the series of letters begin prior to 1850, but the focus is clearly on the last half of the nineteenth century. In an extensive introduction the editors analyze German immigration to the United States and describe the general contents of the letters, the sampling method used to select them, and their editorial policy. JCB

RECENT DISSERTATIONS

Compiled by Richard B. Kielbowicz

This listing of Recent Dissertations covers Volume 53, Number 3 (September 1992) through Volume 53, Number 8 (February 1993). In the listing below, an abbreviated citation is supplied following author, title, degree, institution, and date. This includes the volume and issue number of *Dissertations Abstracts International*, followed by the page number and, when available, the code or order number of the dissertation itself.

AMERICAN STUDIES

Jonathan P. De Vierville, "American Healing Waters: A Chronology (1513-1946) and Historical Survey of America's Major Springs, Spas, and Health Resorts Including a Review of Their Medicinal Virtues, Therapeutic Methods, and Health Care Practices" (Ph.D., Texas-Austin, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2861-A (9239240).

Dorothy M. Schulz, "From Social Worker to Crimefighter: A History of Women in United States Policing" (Ph.D., New York University, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2863-A (9237973).

Katherine A. Smith, "Mother Earth, Woman Spirit: Women and the Feminine Character as Symbol and Reality in the Nineteenth Century Plains Indian Culture" (Ph.D., Saint Louis, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2426-A (9233833).

Catherine T. C. Spaeth, "Purgatory or Promised Land? French Emigres in Philadelphia and Their Perceptions of America During the 1790s" (Ph.D., Minnesota, 1992). DA 53, 3, 860-A (9222481).

Marcia J. Speziale, "The Puritan Pariah or a Citizen of Somewhere Else: Defamation in Massachusetts, 1642 to 1850" (Ph.D., Harvard, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1563-A (9228285).

Csaba Toth, "The Transatlantic Dialogue: 19th-Century American Utopianism and Europe" (Ph.D., Minnesota, 1992). DA 53, 3, 860-A (9222483).

Leonard Travers, "'The Brightest Day in Our Calendar': Independence Day in Boston and Philadelphia, 1777-1826" (Ph.D., Boston University, 1992). DA 53, 3, 860-A (9220766).

Shirley T. Wajda, "'Social Currency': A Domestic History of the Portrait Photograph in the United States, 1839-1889" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2427-A (9235215).

Glenn S. Wallach, "Obedient Sons: Youth and Generational Consciousness in American Culture, 1630-1850s" (Ph.D., Yale, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1200-A (9224378).

ANTHROPOLOGY—ARCHAEOLOGY

Diane E. Barbolla, "Alta California Troops: Acculturation and Material Wealth in a Presidio and Mission Context, 1769-1810" (Ph.D., California-Riverside, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2427-A (9235960).

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ART HISTORY

Gail E. Husch, "'Something Coming': Prophecy and American Painting, 1848-1854" (Ph.D., Delaware, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1702-A (9232628).

ECONOMICS—HISTORY

Yan Li, "The Transformation of the Constitution of Massachusetts, 1780-1860" (Ph.D., Connecticut, 1991). DA 53, 3, 908-A (9221546).

John E. Murray, "Communal Living Standards and Membership Incentives: The Shakers, 1780-1880" (Ph.D., Ohio State, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2925-A (9238239).

EDUCATION—CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Thomas B. Horton, "Moses Waddel: Nineteenth-Century South Carolina Educator" (Ed.D., South Carolina, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2664-A (9239047).

EDUCATION—HISTORY

Sheila M. Rothman, "Narratives of Illness: Gender and Disease in Nineteenth Century America" (Ph.D., Columbia, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1823-A (9232081).

FINE ARTS

Carma de Jong Anderson, "A Historical Overview of the Mormons and Their Clothing, 1840-1850" (Ph.D., Brigham Young, 1992). DA 53, 3, 650-A (9220167).

GEOGRAPHY

Charles M. Cowell, "Historical Change in Georgia Piedmont Forests: Human and Environmental Influences" (Ph.D., Georgia, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2499-A (9235384).

HISTORY—BLACK

Paul W. B. Herring, "Selected Aspects on the History of the African-American in the Mohawk and Upper Hudson Valley, 1633-1940" (Ph.D., State University of New York-Binghampton, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2940-A (9300980).

Don S. McKinney, "Getting Along in Antebellum Georgian Slavery: Dimensions of the Moral Life Heard in the Voices of the Slaves Themselves" (Ph.D., Vanderbilt, 1992). DA 53, 6, 2062-A (9230988).

Junius P. Rodriguez, Jr., "Ripe for Revolt: Louisiana and the Tradition of Slave Insurrection, 1803-1865" (Ph.D., Auburn, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2506-A (9237202).

Ida D. Young, "Between the Voices of Our Ancestors: Afrocentric Strategies, Symbols, Forms of Revolution, and the Philosophical Implications of the Rhetorical Discourse of Abolitionist Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879)" (Ph.D., Temple, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1634-A (9227542).

Robert J. Young, "The Political Culture of Northern African-American Activists, 1830-1859" (Ph.D., Syracuse, 1992). DA 53, 6, 2062-A (9229709).

HISTORY—EUROPEAN

Gaby Weiner, "Controversies and Contradictions: Approaches to the Study of Harriet Martineau, 1802-76" (Ph.D., Open University [United Kingdom], 1991). DA 53, 3, 1249-A (BRDX96544).

HISTORY—UNITED STATES

Alexander O. Boulton, "The Architecture of Slavery: Art, Language, and Society in Early Virginia" (Ph.D., William and Mary, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1251-A (9224071).

Susan Branson, "Politics and Gender: The Political Consciousness of Philadelphia Women in the 1790s" (Ph.D., Northern Illinois, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2514-A (9230698).

Stephen J. Buck, "Political and Economic Transformation in the Civil War Era: DuPage County, Illinois, 1830-1880" (Ph.D., Northern Illinois, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2514-A (9236180).

Anthony G. Carey, "Parties and Politics in Antebellum Georgia" (Ph.D., Emory, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2949-A (9300541).

James Ciment, "In Light of Failure: Bankruptcy, Insolvency and Financial Failure in New York City, 1790-1860" (Ph.D., City University of New York, 1992). DA 53, 4, 1251-A (9224798).

Timothy C. Coogan II, "The Forging of a New Mill Town: North and South Adams, Massachusetts, 1780-1860" (Ph.D., New York University, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2950-A (9237931).

Terrence E. Coyne, "The Hoosac Tunnel" (Ph.D., Clark, 1992). DA 53, 4, 1252-A (9224691).

Patricia O. D'Antonio, "Negotiated Care: A Case Study of the Friends Asylum, 1800-1850" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1641-A (9227645).

Timothy Dodge, "Crime and Punishment in New Hampshire, 1812-1914" (Ph.D., New Hampshire, 1992). DA 53, 4, 1252-A (9225252).

Larry D. Gossett, "The Keepers and the Kept: The First Hundred Years of the Tennessee State Prison System, 1830-1930" (Ph.D., Louisiana State, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2951-A (9301054).

Jerry A. Green, "Charles A. Peabody: A 'Southern' Reformer, Horticulturalist, and Nationalist" (Ph.D., Auburn, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1253-A (9224038).

John A. Hall, "Quieting the Storm: The Establishment of Order in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina" (D.Phil., Oxford [United Kingdom], 1989). DA 53, 7, 2516-A (BRD-97257).

Margaret M. Haviland, "In the World, But Not of the World: The Humanitarian Activities of Philadelphia Quakers, 1790-1820" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1642-A (9227678).

Judith A. Hunter, "Before Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Antebellum Philadelphia" (Ph.D., Yale, 1991). DA 53, 3, 928-A (9221340).

Thomas E. Jenkins, "The Character of God in American Theology: 1800-1900" (Ph.D., Yale, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1254-A (9224352).

Mark S. Joy, "'Into the Wilderness': Protestant Missions Among the Emigrant Indians of Kansas, 1830-1854" (Ph.D., Kansas State, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1643-A (9229245).

Catherine E. Kelly, "Between Town and Country: New England Women and the Creation of a Provincial Middle Class, 1820-1860" (Ph.D., Rochester, 1992). DA 53, 6, 2076-A (9231293).

Mary Lee M. Lang, "Immigration as Treated in Early History Textbooks, 1789-1939: Prelude to Multiculturalism" (Ed.D., Virginia State, 1992). DA 53, 3, 928-A (9223455).

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Ellen M. Litwicki, "Visions of America: Public Holidays and American Cultures, 1776-1900" (Ph.D., Virginia, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2954-A (9237482).

Edward T. McCarron, "The World of Kavanagh and Cottril: A Portrait of Irish Emigration, Entrepreneurship, and Ethnic Diversity in Mid-Maine, 1760-1820" (Ph.D., New Hampshire, 1992). DA 53, 4, 1256-A (9225258).

Kenneth O. McCreedy, "Palladium of Liberty: The American Militia System, 1815-1861" (Ph.D., California-Berkeley, 1991). DA 53, 5, 1644-A (9228764).

Harold E. Mahan, "More Than a Historian: Benson J. Lossing and Historical Writing in the United States, 1830-1890" (Ph.D., Wisconsin-Madison, 1992). DA 53, 6, 2077-A (9221495).

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James D. Schmidt, "'Neither Slavery nor Involuntary Servitude': Free Labor and American Law, ca. 1815-1880" (Ph.D., Rice, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2519-A (9234415).

Clinton E. Stockwell, "A Better Class of People: Protestants in the Shaping of Early Chicago, 1833-1873" (Ph.D., Illinois-Chicago, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2956-A (9238358).

Edward H. Tebbenhoff, "The Momentum of Tradition: Dutch Society and Identity in Schenectady, 1660-1790" (Ph.D., Minnesota, 1992). DA 53, 6, 2079-A (9231084).

John F. Walsh, "'Men of Property and Understanding': The Pennsylvania Republican Party, 1776-1790" (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate School, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2956-A (9238883).

Peter J. Way, "Rough Labour: The Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860" (Ph.D., Maryland, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1258-A (9222781)

Gary P. Zola, "Isaac Harby of Charleston: The Life and Works of an Enlightened Jew During the Early National Period" (Ph.D., Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1259-A (9203411).

HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Emily A. Thompson, "'Mysteries of the Acoustic': Architectural Acoustics in America, 1800-1932" (Ph.D., Princeton, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2521-A (9235247).

INFORMATION SCIENCE

Pamela Sankar, "State Power and Record-Keeping: The History of Individualized Surveillance in the United States, 1790-1935" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2140-A (9235199).

LITERATURE—AMERICAN

Florence D. Amamoto, "Getting Goods and Being Good: The Idea of Success in American Autobiographies" (Ph.D., Virginia, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2811-A (9237473).

Judith H. M. Bean, "Margaret Fuller's Legacy: Gender, Voice, and Authority" (Ph.D., Texas A&M, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2812-A (9300393).

Kristin M. Boudreau, "The Spectacular Invalid and the Stage of Illness: Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D., Rochester, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1911-A (9231266).

Ruth L. Bowman, "Performance, Play, and Pigs in Hawthorne's Social Romances" (Ph.D., Northwestern, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1911-A (9229881).

Victoria Brehm, "Refiguring a Literature of Place: The Economics of Great Lakes Maritime Literature" (Ph.D., Iowa, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2367-A (9235803).

Dean W. Casale, "Appropriating Poe: Problems in American Literary History" (Ph.D., State University of New York-Stony Brook, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1912-A (9232781).

Russell J. Castronovo, "Monuments, Fathers, Slaves: Genealogies of American Democracy" (Ph.D., California-Santa Cruz, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2368-A (9235702).

Mary M. Chapman, "'Living Pictures': Women and *Tableaux Vivants* in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture" (Ph.D., Cornell, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2812-A (9300786).

George A. Davy, "Argumentation in Thomas Jefferson's 'Notes on the State of Virginia'" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania State, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1516-A (9226679)

Michael S. Degnan, "Plurisignificance and Structure in Hawthorne's 'The Marble Faun'" (Ph.D., State University of New York-Buffalo, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1516-A (9228038).

Robert A. Dunne, "Protestant Backlash: The American Dream Myth and Marginalized Groups, 1820-1860" (Ph.D., Lehigh University, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1517-A (9226061).

Mathew D. Fisher, "A Selected, Annotated Edition of the Letters of George Ripley, 1828-1841" (Ph.D., Ball State, 1992). DA 53, 4, 1158-A (9222616).

Shelli B. Fowler, "'The Ghost in the Machine': Text and Subtext in the Narratives of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women Writers" (Ph.D., Texas-Austin, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2813-A (9239253).

Neil S. Gordon, "Stranger Than Fiction: Truth in the Occult Short Stories of Hawthorne and Balzac" (Ph.D., Yale, 1991). DA 53, 3, 810-A (9221375).

Albert B. Harwell, Jr., "Writing the Wilderness: A Study of Henry Thoreau, John Muir, and Mary Austin" (Ph.D., Tennessee, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2370-A (9233545).

Nancy L. J. Hurst, "Selected Literary Letters of Sophia Peabody Hawthorne, 1842-1853" (Ph.D., Ohio State, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2814-A (9238197).

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Stephen P. Knadler, "'Technology' in the Garden: Romantic Art and Its Educated Expression in the Age of Emerson and Melville" (Ph.D., Vanderbilt, 1991). DA 53, 6, 1914-A (9230920).

Kun J. Lee, "Reading Race in(to) the American Renaissance: A Study of Race in Emerson, Whitman, Melville, and Ellison" (Ph.D., Texas-Austin, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2815-A (9239296).

Thomas R. Moore, "Double Voice, Double Vision: The Rhetoric of Hawthorne's Sketches, Prefaces, and Essays" (Ph.D., Connecticut, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1915-A (9233011).

Terence M. Mulcaire, "Democratic Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century American Culture" (Ph.D., California-Berkeley, 1991). DA 53, 5, 1519-A (9228788).

Mary V. T. Murtha, "The Visible Circle: Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Literary Sketch in America" (Ph.D., Maryland, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1160-A (9222739).

Evelyn E. Nettles, "Literary Voices of Nineteenth Century Reform Movement: An Examination of the Literary Works of Frances E. W. Harper" (Ph.D., Tennessee, 1991). DA 53, 3, 811-A (9221788).

Kathryn M. Nowell, "Authorial Voice and the Struggle for Gender Identity in Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Ph.D., Tennessee, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2373-A (9233570).

Henry M. W. Russell, "Community Versus the Imperial Mind: Images of Civil Strife in Hawthorne's 'The Marble Faun' (Ph.D., Louisiana State, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2817-A (9301101).

Richard A. Sax, "Sailing Down the Mississippi of Broadway: Regional Stereotypes in the Literary Imagination of Herman Melville, 1846-1857" (Ph.D., Michigan, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1520-A (9226992).

Roger G. Schmidt, "Spiritual Inheritances in African-American Literature: Evolution of a Triple Heritage" (Ph.D., Bowling Green, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2818-A (9237698).

Pamela C. Sellers, "Margaret Fuller's 'Summer on the Lakes, in 1843': It is Not Good Enough Merely to *Be* Here" (Ph.D., Michigan State, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2374-A (9233935).

Robert M. Smith, "Orality and Typography: A Study of Contrasts in the Prose of Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Ph.D., Southwestern Louisiana, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1520-A (9229557).

Laurie A. Sterling, "The Reconstruction of Fables: Narrative and the Management of Value(s) in Hawthorne's Fiction" (Ph.D., Rochester, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1918-A (9231319).

John P. Tassoni, "'A Thousand Conversations': Genre Placement and Social Relations in American Sentimental Narratives" (Ph.D., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1918-A (9229031).

Amy M. Thomas, "Who Makes the Text? The Production and Use of Literature in Antebellum America" (Ph.D., Duke, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2375-A (9237881).

Robert S. Tilton, "American Lavinia: The Pocahontas Narrative in Antebellum America" (Ph.D., Stanford, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2375-A (9234174).

Anne K. Weed, "Virtue Reworded: The Ideology of Angelic Womanhood in Antebellum American Literature" (Ph.D., Rochester, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1918-A (9231328).

Catherine A. Wilcoxson, "'Shooting the Void': The Life and Work of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman" (Ph.D., Virginia, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2819-A (9237534).

Susan S. Williams, "The Confounding Image: The Figure of the Portrait in Nineteenth Century American Fiction" (Ph.D., Yale, 1991). DA 53, 4, 1162-A (9224379).

Lee A. Wright, "Identity, Family, and Folklore in African-American Literature" (Ph.D., Toledo, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2376-A (9235785).

Joseph A. Zimbalatti, "Anti-Calvinist Allegory: A Critical Edition of William Austin's 'Peter Rugg, the Missing Man' (1824-1827)" (Ph.D., Fordham, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1522-A (9223831).

LITERATURE—COMPARATIVE

Richard R. Williams, "The Fourth Point: Representation of Nineteenth Century Electromagnetic Phenomena from Edgar Allan Poe to Stephane Mallarme" (Ph.D., Texas-Austin, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2806-A (9239377).

LITERATURE—GENERAL

Jennifer P. Hayward, "Trash, Strips, and Soap: Serial Fictions and Mass Audiences, 1836-1992" (Ph.D., Princeton, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2800-A (9230630).

LITERATURE—MODERN

Annegret J. Wiemer, "The Feminist Science Fiction Utopia: Faces of a Genre, 1820-1987" (Ph.D., University of Alberta [Canada], 1991). DA 53, 8, 2811-A (DANN69991).

MASS COMMUNICATION

Karen B. Brown, "From Travel to Tourism: The Relation of Photography to Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D., New York University, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2586-A (9237741).

POLITICAL SCIENCE—GENERAL

Christopher M. Cahill, "Reflections on Political Authority and Rootlessness in Works of Hawthorne and Melville" (Ph.D., Illinois-Urbana, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2525-A (9236410).

Matthew C. Price, "The Gray Revolution: The Growing Power of Older Americans, 1790-2030" (Ph.D., Johns Hopkins, 1992). DA 53, 5, 1653-A (9229390).

John G. West, Jr., "The Politics of Revelation and Reason: American Evangelicals and the Founders' Solution to the Theological-Political Problem, 1800-1835" (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate School, 1992). DA 53, 8, 2971-A (9238884).

RELIGION—GENERAL

Karen Westerfield Tucker, "'Till Death Us Do Part': The Rites of Marriage and Burial Prepared by John Wesley and Their Development in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784-1939" (Ph.D., Notre Dame, 1992). DA 53, 7, 2411-A (9233647).

RELIGION—HISTORY

Diana H. Butler, "Standing Against the Whirlwind: The Evangelical Party in the Nineteenth Century Protestant Episcopal Church" (Ph.D., Duke, 1991). DA 53, 6, 1963-A (9227041).

Daryl M. Elliott, "Bishop Milton Wright and the Quest for a Christian America" (Ph.D., Drew, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1964-A (9233181).

Timothy E. Fulop, "Elias Smith and the Quest for Gospel Liberty: Popular Religion and Democratic Radicalism in Early Nineteenth-Century New England" (Ph.D., Princeton, 1992). DA 53, 6, 1964-A (9230225).

Linda K. Miller, "The Portrayal of Federal Intervention in Domestic Disorders in Selected U.S. History Textbooks" (Ed.D., Virginia, 1991). DA 53, 3, 859-A (9221072).

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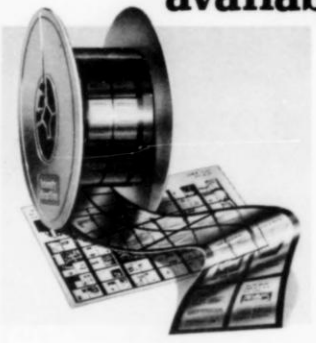

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